

HEALTH & WELLBEING BOARD	
28 March 2019	
Title	Update Report on the progress of Barnet Children's Services Improvement Action Plan and other CES Committee Priorities
Report of	Chairman of the Committee, Councillor David Longstaff
Wards	All
Status	Public
Urgent	No
Key	No
Enclosures	Appendix 1: Ofsted Monitoring Visit Feedback letter (February 2019) Appendix 2: Family Services Performance Report Appendix 3: Revised 16/17 Homeless Protocol Appendix 4: Draft 2019/20 Delivery Plan – Barnet Children and Young People's Plan
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Summary

The Health and Wellbeing Board on 14 September 2017 agreed to receive the update report on the Ofsted Improvement Action Plan at its meetings. This report presents the information that was considered by the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee on 13th March 2019.

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 eighth update report to be received by Committee and the reporting period for progress is November to December 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 2.

The report includes:

- An update from the sixth OFSTED monitoring visit which took place in February 2019, and focussed on Care Leaving Services, and how young people prepare to leave care;
- A revised Protocol between Children's Social Care and Housing Options joint procedure for responding to 16/17 year old homelessness.
- A draft 2019/20 Delivery Plan for the Barnet Children and Young People Plan for review and approval by Members.

Recommendations

- 1. That the Board note the progress of the Barnet Children's Services Improvement Action Plan as set out in paragraphs 1.11 to 1.34.**
- 2. That the Board note the OFSTED monitoring visit feedback letter.**
- 3. That the Board notes the updated Joint Protocol for homeless young people aged 16 and 17 attached as Appendix 2.**
- 4. That the Board notes the 2019-20 Delivery Plan of the Children and Young People's Plan attached as Appendix 4.**

- 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 six monitoring visits of Barnet Children's Services, which focussed on 'front door' services, Duty and Assessment, Intervention and Planning, Children in Care, work with vulnerable adolescents and Care Leaver services. 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 A sixth monitoring visit took place on 14 and 15 February 2019, and focussed on the leaving care service, Onwards and Upwards, and young people transitioning to leaving care. OFSTED has indicated that this is the last monitoring visit that the Local Authority can expect. The next visit by OFSTED is likely to be a full Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) in late Spring/early Summer 2019, which will be a reinspection of all services.

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

- 1.7 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. The new plan reflects the progress made during the first year, and includes emerging priorities. It reflects the rigorous focus on assessment and care planning across Family Services.
- 1.8 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

1.9 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:

- 1.10 This is the ninth update report to be received by Committee and the reporting period for progress is January to February 2019.
- 1.11 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.

Priority 1: Systems Leadership for Children

- 1.12 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.
- 1.13 The draft new Children and Young People's Plan was submitted to the January Committee and approved for consultation, which is scheduled to finish on 6th April after which appropriate amendments will be made before being signed off by the Strategic Director.
- 1.14 35 students from across Barnet have taken part in workshops where they had the opportunity to work with staff to review and evaluate the local offer, joined a design workshop to ensure our Children and Young People's Plan is child friendly, and gave their views in a communications focus group about how they want to be communicated with. The aim was for us to understand what is important to young people and listen to their views about how we can interact with and involve them in the services we provide for them. Their views will now form the new Communications Strategy and have informed the Children and Young People's Plan.

- 1.15 The Barnet Safeguarding Children's Partnership Executive Group has agreed the business plan and priorities for 2018-19, which is aligned to the Ofsted Improvement Plan. The new Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA) are being developed by the partners. These need to be published in June 2018. The arrangements will be brought back to committee in May for agreement.

Improvement theme 2: Enhancing Practice Leadership for Children

- 1.16 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.
- 1.17 Work 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 continues across all services.

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

- 1.18 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.
- 1.19 The Early Help Hubs are continuing to bed in across the borough. The next phase of the Early Help strategy – now that hubs have been established across the borough – is being developed, and will focus on training and development of staff, maturation of its relationship with the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), and targeting delivery in the areas (both geographical and thematic) where Early Help services need to be focussed on.
- 1.20 The revised Joint Protocol between the Housing Options service and Children's Social Care is appended to this report as Appendix 2. The previous version of the protocol was agreed by the Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding (CELS) committee in September 2017.
- 1.21 Since it was agreed in September 2017, the Protocol has provided clarity on Barnet's commitment, and responsibility, to ensuring that young people receive a good or better service when they ask for help. The Ofsted inspection report had noted that this was an area that the local authority had already identified as in need of development and which was being re-modelled and made a recommendation to ensure that homeless 16 to 17 year olds are thoroughly assessed and that appropriate ongoing support is offered to them to meet their needs.
- 1.22 The Protocol has been reviewed and updated following the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 coming into force, which amended the Housing Act 1996 to expand on the Council's duties to prevent homelessness as follows:

- Preventing homelessness (taking “reasonable steps to help the applicant to secure that accommodation does not cease to be available” (s.195 of the Housing Act 1996))
- Providing homelessness relief or taking “reasonable steps to help the applicant to secure that suitable accommodation becomes available” (s.189B of the Housing Act 1996))

1.23 The revised protocol still contains the revisions previously added to reflect best practice following the last review by Members at CELS in September 2017. Members are asked to review and agree the revised Joint Protocol.

Improvement theme 4: Strengthening Assessment for Children

- 1.24 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.
- 1.25 A comprehensive training offer in place for practitioners which provides learning opportunities about specific issues relating to culture and faith, allowing social workers to incorporate this knowledge into their assessments. In addition to classroom based training, our Practice Development Workers continue to run identity and diversity workshops with social workers. Since January 2018, 165 staff have attended one of these workshops. The impact of this activity has been a reduction in the percentage of ‘inadequate’ audits in DAT under the domain of ‘Diversity and Identity’ across October, November and December.
- 1.26 Data on strategy discussions shows that we have improved Police and Education compliance for multi-agency attendance at strategy discussions. Audit data for the three months October to December 2018 shows no inadequate gradings after October in DAT and I&P and an increase in the proportion of ‘good’ gradings. In December in DATS all strategy discussions that were audited were graded as ‘good’.

Improvement theme 5: Strengthening Planning for Children

- 1.27 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.
- 1.28 Practice development activity around this theme has focussed on direct work skills with practitioners. Targeted courses have included intervention skills workshops, direct work with teenagers and adolescents including on building relationships, and implementing systemic ideas into practice, which has been attended by 55 social workers. Between October and December 2018 we have seen fewer ‘inadequate’ gradings for ‘Child’s Voice and Engagement’ in DAT along with sustained majority ‘good’ gradings under this domain in Children in Care. Audit data under the domain of ‘Parents/Carers Engagement’ shows sustained ‘good’ outcomes across Intervention & Planning and Children in Care. Practice Development Workers are offering regular coaching and drop in sessions for social workers on direct work, which we expect to result in an increasing proportion of ‘good’ audits in this domain.

- 1.29 Audits show that there has been an improvement in the quality of Children in Need Plans and meetings (CIN), and Child Protection Plans and Core Group Meetings (CPC/CGM) in the Intervention and Planning service. Comparative data between October and December (no data is available for November) shows that there has been a significant increase in the proportion of 'good' audits under the CIN domain, and a reduction to zero of inadequate gradings under the CPC/CGM domain.
- 1.30 A new assessment and planning tool for Children in Care and Care Leavers called 'All About Me' will be introduced from March 2019. It will provide a simpler way of presenting the plan, which will be easier for children and young people to understand, and more intuitive for staff to use.

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

- 1.31 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.
- 1.32 Communication across the Council has been led by the Chief Executive who has raised the importance of children's services improvement through Chief Executive briefings which have all included the focus on children and children's services improvement, and Director letters to staff all contain wellbeing of children at the heart of what we do. Additionally, we have issued guidance on Corporate Parenting principles to authors of Council reports – a copy of this guidance is in the papers for this meeting of the Improvement Board – which will ensure this good practice feeds through the organisation.
- 1.33 Managers have regular meaningful contact with staff at all levels, from regular fortnightly directors briefings led by the DCS, the 'Grapevine' news email to all staff, director's emails focussing on particular themes or events, to the staff forum which is part of seeking to reflect a more staff led approach.
- 1.34 In November 2018 we completed our second social worker survey of the year, and a report on the outcomes is included in the papers of this month's Improvement Board. Areas of improvement include that social workers report more regular focussed supervision, and they felt that there is support from their team/the authority when there is pressure or there are difficult emotional decisions to make. Most workers agreed that they apply the Resilience philosophy when working with children and families and 92% of respondents agreed that they could access training, learning and development that helps them drive their practice. Areas where we need to do more according to the views of survey respondents have fed into new approaches to auditing, the introduction of clinical therapy support and the use of appreciative enquiry.

Quantitative Performance Data

- 1.35 Quantitative performance data is based on activity in January 2019. 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 3.

2. ADDITIONAL CES PRIORITIES IN THE CORPORATE PLAN

- 2.1 There are two indicators related to the OFSTED update in the Corporate Plan. These are:

Indicator	Polarity	Annual Target	Q3 18/19			Q3 17/18	Benchmarking
			Target	Result	DOT		
Overall progress against Children's Services Improvement Action Plan	Monitor	Monitor	Monitor	Pace of change begun to establish improved social work practice	New for 18/19	New for 18/19	No benchmark available
Findings of Ofsted Monitoring Visits	Monitor	Monitor	Monitor		New for 18/19	New for 18/19	No benchmark available

- 2.2 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

- 2.3 This is a CES Committee priority within the Corporate Plan Addendum 2018/19.
- 2.4 Partnership arrangements continue to be in place with MAC UK, Growing Against Violence and Art Against Knives, and continue to support the delivery of work with young people at risk of exploitation (including in relation to gangs).
- 2.5 Using the learning from our work through REACH and the partnerships outlined above, Work during the previous period has focussed on developing and implementing a revised operational framework focussed on addressing the early complex indicators which contribute towards the risk of being exploited or going missing, rather than reacting to events.
- 2.6 The operational framework has been supported by:
- an improved training offer for staff and partners, which focusses on building trusting relationships with young people as the primary mechanism to implementing change. The impact of the new training approach will be evaluated.
 - Strengthened data collection and analysis from across the partnership, which enables partners and social care staff to have a clearer understanding of what is happening in Barnet and the lived experience of young people, and where resources should be targeted next.

- 2.7 Barnet continues to deliver using the monies awarded following a bid to the Home Office's Trusted Relationships programme. Barnet's programme 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.
- 2.8 The project works 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.
- 2.9 Since being announced as a successful applicant, the following progress has been made with the Trusted Relationships project:
- Several planning and preparation meetings between partners have taken place, with the first partnership Steering Group for Barnet's Vulnerable Adolescents taking place in December 2018;
 - AAK and MAC-UK have co-produced the multi-agency clinical, safeguarding, information sharing and operational arrangements and frameworks;
 - The Vulnerable Young Adults Forum has been established, and looks to draw together the wider partnership offer in this area;
 - We have recruited to the Partnership and Engagement Lead post that will lead this project.;
 - AAK have engaged young people in the co-production of their creative spaces in the community setting and context. A team of 'Creative Directors' have been established and the process of recruiting 4 Youth Consultants is currently taking place;
 - AAK have engaged in youth-led activities and opportunities to build trusted relationships with young people through informal contact time;
 - A schedule / timetable of community creative spaces in the places that work for young people has been created, this includes an additional 4th creative space that was established on Grahame Park Estate as of August 2018;
 - AAK and MAC-UK have started to implement evaluation measures with young people, partners and Home Office Independent Evaluators to monitor impact of placement team and outcomes for service users.

Corporate Priority update: Delivering the family-friendly Barnet vision

- 2.10 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.

- 2.11 The Annual Young People's Survey showed 84 per cent of young people think Barnet is a family friendly place to live. Top personal safety concerns are gangs, bullying and drug taking. This has helped to inform the new CYPP and responses will assist with better targeting and improvement of services
- 2.12 A draft version of the Plan was presented at the January 2019 CES Committee, and public consultation has been used to shape the final version. The delivery plan is attached to this report as Appendix 4.

Corporate Priority update: Ensuring the attainment and progress of children in Barnet schools remains in the top 10% nationally

- 2.13 Progress on this Corporate Priority is contained in the report "Educational Standards in Barnet 2017/18" which is also on the agenda for this meeting.

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.

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 2019-2024 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 pleasant, well maintained borough that we protect and invest in;
 - Residents live happy, healthy, independent lives with the most vulnerable protected;
 - Has safe and strong communities where people get along well.
- 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 Policy and Resources Committee of June 2017 agreed to invest an additional £5.7m in Family Services, some of which has been invested to improve practice to ensure improvements are made which result in better outcomes for children, young people and families. The detailed breakdown of this additional £5.7 million is provided in item 7, CELS agenda 18 September 2017.
- 6.2.2 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 £4.409m in the 2018/19 Policy & Resource Committee Business Planning Report.

Budget forecasts

- 6.2.3 Children Services budget forecast at the end of January 2019 based on information available is £1.320m overspend.

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 The Children and Social Work Act 2017 amended the Children Act 2004, introducing changes to multi-agency safeguarding arrangements requiring the statutory agencies (local authority, CCG and police) to work together with other relevant agencies for the purpose of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in their local area, including working together to identify and respond to the needs of children.
- 6.4.5 The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 amended the Housing Act 1996 in relation to preventing homelessness, including taking a more personalised approach and requiring local authorities to assess and agree a personalised plan to help secure that accommodation remains available.

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 February 2019, OFSTED conducted a fifth monitoring visit of Children's Services, which focused on children in care. The feedback from this visit was reported to CES in this report. Delivery on the Improvement Action Plan continues, and preparation is now focussed on an Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services.

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, race and ethnicity, faith or belief, sex, gender reassignment, language, maternity / parental status 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 Barnet also has an above average rate of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children when compared to statistical neighbours, and the statistical neighbour average. In 2018, Barnet had 66 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, compared to an average of 34 amongst statistical neighbours. The only statistical neighbour which had more was Hillingdon, a London Borough which is within a 10-mile radius of Heathrow airport.

6.6.5 Unaccompanied young people experience separation and loss from their families, and in addition to this they are also likely to have experienced further trauma, such as abuse and exploitation whilst travelling to the UK. There have been several practice and service developments to ensure the needs of this group are met, many of whom arrive in the UK without being able to speak English. In 2018,

- an education programme was commissioned from Whitefields School to induct unaccompanied young people into the UK and education system;
- an initial health assessment pathway was created that included specific processes for unaccompanied young people, to accommodate the range of checks that need to be undertaken for this group;
- a new unaccompanied asylum-seeking children specialist Personal Advisor role was created in Onwards and Upwards. The worker speaks Pashto and Albanian – the two most common languages spoken by Barnet's unaccompanied young people – and has experience in dealing with the Home Office and dealing with tasks such as Human Rights Assessments, which has been invaluable in supporting this vulnerable group of young people;
- Practice improvements in life story work resulted in a former unaccompanied young person creating a video work as an outcome of his successful life story work and foster placement;
- All newly arrived unaccompanied young people are now allocated to a worker in Onwards and Upwards upon arrival to reduce the number of workers and times a young person has to repeat their story.

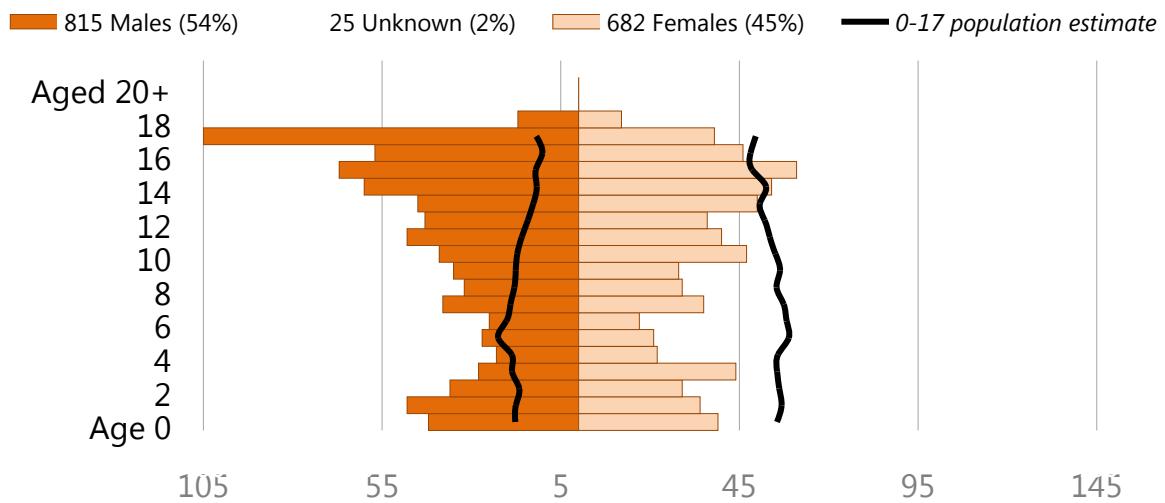
6.6.6 In Barnet, we have a higher percentage of children in need with a recorded disability compared to the London and England rate. As at 31 March 2018, the rate of disability was as follows:

Local authority	Number of Children in need episodes at 31 March	Number of children in need episodes at 31 March with a disability recorded	Percentage of children in need episodes at 31 March with a disability recorded
England	404,710	49,770	12.3
London	72,810	9,460	13.0
Inner London	31,460	3,900	12.4
Outer London	41,350	5,560	13.4
Barnet	2,107	317	15.0

6.6.7 One key service which supports disabled children, young people and families is the 0-25 service. The service was reorganised in September 2017 and consists of a team of social workers, family support workers, direct payment workers and occupational therapists who work with young people as per the Children Act 1989 and Care Act 2014. The service supports a strength based model of practice that aims to build families strengths, resilience and capacity. The service intervenes and supports families earlier and throughout young people's transition to adulthood, building their capacity and resilience.

- 6.6.8 Since the service's introduction, and the inadequate Ofsted rating, practice has improved across children and adult cases, and there is significantly better partnership working with Adult services, SEND, Health and parents - with the aim to achieve effective co-production. There is a better understanding of safeguarding within the service which means that children with disabilities are better protected.
- 6.6.9 The focus for 2019 regarding support for disabled children, young people and families pertains to practice development, data and systems and support for families, such as recommissioning the Short Breaks service. These fall under the OFSTED improvement plan themes of 'enhancing practice leadership for children' and 'strengthening planning for children', which will lead to better outcomes for children, young people and families.
- 6.6.10 As at 20 December 2018, there are more children in need aged 14 to 18 than any other age group, as illustrated in the graph 1 below.

Graph 1: Age/Gender of all Children in Need (1522) (including Child Protection and Looked after Children)



- 6.6.11 The number and needs of adolescents has resulted in several services being invested in to ensure that emerging and existing issues are supported to prevent them becoming more serious problems; data shows that this age group are more likely to be affected by issues such as exploitation, criminality and poor mental health. As at 30 November 2018, of 27 young people identified as known to the Youth Offending Team and vulnerable (gone missing, those with an open Child Sexual Exploitation or gang flag, and those who have been the subject of a Sexual Exploitation And Missing meeting, within a selected time period) 96% (n=26), were aged 15 to 17, one was 12 years old.
- 6.6.12 One of the services that has been invested in to engage vulnerable young people in this age group is the REACH Team. This team was set up in April 2017 to provide multi-agency wrap-around support to young people at high risk of criminal or sexual exploitation. Further to this the Trusted Relationships Project will be delivered in 2019 following a successful bid to the Home Office in September 2018; more details about this can be found in 2.2 to 2.6.
- 6.6.13 A further way in which the service is attempting to meet the specific needs of this age group, is through the provision of mental health support at Onwards and Upwards,

which includes 1:1 appointments with trainee psychotherapists from Terapia which is available for care leavers in need of emotional support.

- 6.6.14 Some areas of social work practice in relation to inequalities and disadvantage still remain 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 Ofsted improvement 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.
- 6.6.15 Additional equalities and diversity information and data in relation to service improvements that have, and continue to be made following the 2017 OFSTED inspection, are outlined within the Self-Evaluation Framework presented at the November 2018 CES Committee. 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.

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 The Children in Care Survey was re-launched on 10th December 2018 as part of a two-week campaign to capture our children and young people's views. The campaign was called **It's All About Me Fortnight** and was a targeted effort from Corporate Parenting teams. Two surveys were used, tailored to two different age groups – one for 8 to 12-year olds and one for 13 to 25-year olds.

6.7.4 All Children in Care and Care Leavers aged 8-25 were surveyed. We received 74 responses in total: 30 responses to the survey for 8-12-year olds and 44 responses to the survey for 13-25-year olds. This represents an improvement of 60.9% when compared to the previous survey completion rate (46 responses).

6.7.5 Initial findings are as follows:

A Good Education

- 90% of 8-12-year old respondents said they enjoyed their education and were more likely to enjoy school because of the knowledge they are learning or their friends
- 77% of 13-25-year olds respondents feel they have been able to have their say in their education or training
- Not everyone has the same experience – some 13-25-year-olds responded that they didn't feel as supported as others in their current studies, or in choosing options on what to do next
- Responses to the 8-12- year- old survey indicated some experience of bullying and negative peer to peer relationships.

Championing Your Needs

- 86% of respondents agreed that they have been given the opportunity to understand and explore their identity and family culture
- Among the 8-12-year olds, this was 94%, and for the 13-25-year olds, this was 82%
- Main gaps highlighted were around opportunities and understanding around being LGBTQ+ and lack of information being given about specific opportunities linked to religion or country specific culture, e.g. knowledge about Eritrean groups.

Keeping Healthy

- 86% of respondents said that they had felt emotionally worried
- Among the 8-12-year olds, this was 81%, and for the 13-25-year olds, 89% felt emotionally worried
- Children and Young people would turn to their Carers as the first port of call for emotional support, which is followed by school support staff and/or their social worker
- No young person identified that they used KOOTH, the online counselling portal for young people.

Staying Safe

- 84% of respondents agreed that they felt safe in their community.

- Among the 8-12-year olds, this was 70%, and for 13-25-year olds, 90% agreed that they felt safe.

Feeling a Sense of Belonging

- 99% of respondents felt some involvement in decisions about their life
- Among the 8-12-year olds, this was 100%, and for 13-25-year olds, 99% felt involvement in decisions about their life
- When asked about how well the Council listens to and understands their views 67% answered excellent or good
- 70% felt that they saw their Social Worker often enough
- The survey highlighted Quality of communication is important – young people appreciate face to face conversation, and the Council doing what it said it will do.
- The young people appreciate the events, such as the Celebration Events to celebrate the successes of young people – some suggestions that we follow this up with more written acknowledgement of achievements.
- The survey showed that few young people were aware of #BOP forums.

6.7.6 Corporate Advisory Parenting Panel will use a more in-depth analysis of the results, alongside the results of the other work with young people over the last 12 months to agree what will happen as a result of the messages from the survey.

6.7.7 Other activity 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 includes:

- 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.
- Improved our Mental Health offer for Children in Care and Care Leavers, in partnership with the Barnet Integrated Clinical Service and Terepia.
- A Local Offer for care leavers is currently out for consultation with young people and stakeholders. The deadline for responses has been extended until 15th March 2019 in order to ensure that young people have the chance to review the current draft. The final version of the Local Offer will be published by the end of April 2019. Following publication, 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 and backdated to April 2018 when implemented in September 2018. This scheme helps 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 aims to 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 participation 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 until March 2021.
- 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. Messages from the Children in Care survey outlined in paragraphs 6.7.3 – 6.7.5 will be used both in service design, and also as part of monitoring 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)