



CHILDREN, EDUCATION and SAFEGUARDING COMMITTEE

13 January 2020

Title	Family Services Quarterly Update
Report of	Chairman of the Committee, Councillor David Longstaff
Wards	All
Status	Public (with Exempt Appendix 2)
Urgent	No
Key	No
Enclosures	Appendix 1: ChaT Report Appendix 2: Annual Report on Corporate Parenting (April 2018 - March 2019) Appendix 3: Barnet Self Evaluation November 2019 Appendix 4: LGA Guide for Councillors, Corporate Parenting, November 2019 Appendix 5: LGA Cllr Resource Pack, Support for Care Leavers, November 2019
Officer Contact Details	Chris Munday Executive Director for Children and Young People Chris.Munday@barnet.gov.uk

Summary

This report gives an update on Family Services progress against key areas and asks Members to note and scrutinise performance.

The report updates Members on our Annual Conversation with Ofsted that took place in November 2019. As part of the ILACS framework, we discussed our progress against the recommendations from the Ofsted Inspection as well as our self-evaluation (appendix 3). The report also contextualises the data that can be found in Appendix 1, Children's services Analysis Tool (ChAT).

Appendix 2 reports on the progress and outcomes for children in care and care leavers in Barnet for the period April 2018 to March 2019. It incorporates the Annual Independent Reviewing Officer report, the Annual Adoption Report and the Annual Fostering Report. The report outlines our improvement approach, focused on resilience-based practice, and reports on strategic and operational actions taken on our improvement journey.

Recommendations

- 1. That the Committee note and scrutinise the Children's Social Care performance information provided in Appendix 1**
- 2. That the committee notes and scrutinise progress of performance against our corporate parenting responsibilities provided in Appendix 2**
- 3. That the committee notes and scrutinise progress of performance against our Ofsted Self Evaluation provided in Appendix 3**
- 4. That the committee notes new resource packs from the Local Government Association for Corporate Parenting and Support for Care Leavers in Appendices 4 and 5**

- 1.1 In November we met with Ofsted for our annual conversation as part of the ILACs inspection framework. Included in appendix 3 is our self evaluation, which formed the basis of much of the discussion around our performance this year. The self evaluation looks in detail at practice across Family Services and identifies our achievements and progress as well as areas of focus for the year ahead. We have used the areas of focus to form our Divisional Plans, which will be monitored by the Senior Leadership Team and scrutiny of progress on actions aligned to the Children and Young People's Plan will be provided by the Safeguarding Children's Partnership.
- 1.2 We updated Ofsted about our Safeguarding Children's Partnership arrangements. This included that we recruited an independent chair for the learning review group to consider serious case reviews, and that we have appointed Red Quadrant as independent scrutineer, following a tendering exercise, as they will be able to scrutinise the whole partnership as the team includes health, social care and police expertise.
- 1.3 We also provided inspectors with an update about progress against our action plan to address the recommendations from the Ofsted inspection report.

- 1.3.1 Under ‘the incorporation of actions from the vulnerable adolescents at risk panel (VARP) and exploitation strategy meetings into child in need and child protection plans’, we were able to report that new IT processes are being tested in the system to allow SEAM strategy meeting records to clearly set out the rationale for decision making. The practice standards document has been updated to reflect practice expectations for the timely integration of actions arising from VARP and SEAM Strategy Meetings into children’s plans, and also actions arising from MARAC.
- 1.3.2 The All About Me assessment and plan has been built into the Children in Care workflow in LCS. The updating of the All About Me plan as an assessment tool used at times of change is completed by some social workers, however consistent implementation is yet to be achieved across the service. This practice issue is being managed through targeted training, supervision and exception reporting to managers. Individual action plans have been developed with practitioners to address this. Service days continue to take place regularly at 8-week intervals to ensure learning from the Ofsted feedback remains a priority for all care planning for children. This is addressed in the themes of our vision for our children and how a child’s journey is likely to change and will require creative and individual care planning throughout their childhood.
- 1.4 We are proposing to extend the current advocacy contract with Action for Children to align it with the Independent Visitors Services contract and end date, which is also provided by Action for Children. Action for Children attended our 11th September Fostering Support Group to talk about their advocacy offer for children in care. We will be sending out a reminder of their services and how to access them in our quarterly newsletter in December. We will update the foster carers leaflet in the induction folder for all new foster carers as well as having this as a standing agenda item at every other support group – at least 6 times per year – going forward.

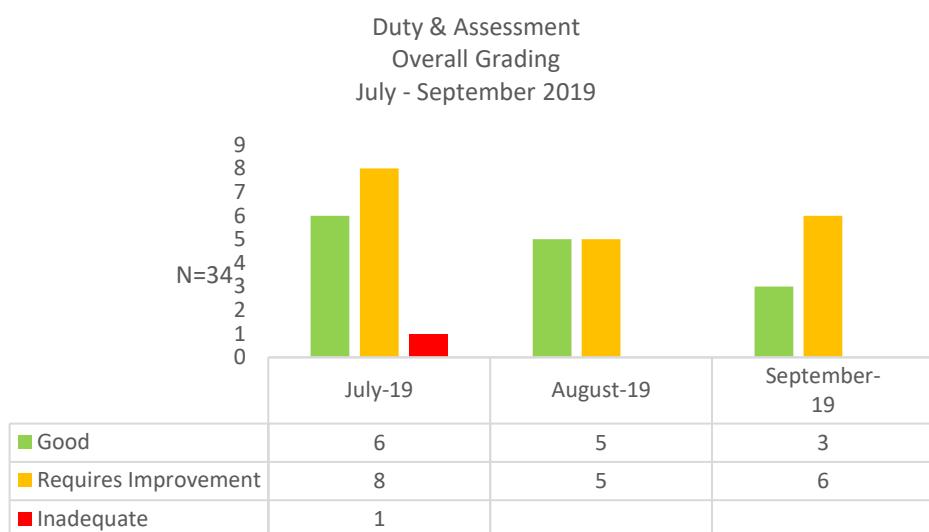
- 1.5 Current advocacy data from the provider shows that in quarter two (July, August & September) there are more children in the advocacy system than in quarter one. During Q2, Action for Children worked with 44 young people, 24[1] of whom were carried over from the previous quarter. Action for Children received 20 new referrals in Quarter 2 and closed 7 cases. Over half of the young people Action for Children advocated for were male and most of them (29 young people) were aged 16+. Over half of the young people (28) were placed outside of borough, some as far afield as Swansea and Carlisle.

Advocacy Cases	Quarter 1	Quarter 2
Carried over from previous Q	16	24*
New Referrals	14*	20
Closed Cases	6*	7
Carried over to next quarter	24	37

- 1.6 The Children's services Analysis Tool (ChAT) provided in appendix 1 of this report provides the performance information that sits alongside the narrative included below. Local reporting information is included in this update to provide additional context for Members to enhance scrutiny of Children's Social Care performance and to effectively discharge their statutory duty as corporate parents.
- 1.7 November workforce data shows a vacancy rate of 62 social work posts, which is an increase since the last CES report. We expect this to reduce as our cohort of 12 students on their Assessed and Supported Year of Employment (ASYE) move into social work posts in the coming months as soon as their professional registration has been completed. We have launched our new recruitment campaign which coincided with an article in The Guardian promoting the positive improvements made across Children's Services. We attended as stallholders at a jobs fair in November and are following up on potential applicants, and we are looking at the potential of recruiting from overseas. Recruitment of social workers is a challenge for councils across London, and we are participating in the ALDCS workforce group, which aims to bring local authorities together to share best practice in recruiting and retaining staff.
- 1.8 Our annual workforce return shows that we have more staff who are in the 20-29 year old age bracket, and that we have increased the number of staff who have worked here for less than two years. In line with our monthly returns, the annual figure shows an increase in the number of agency staff by 48 compared to this time last year, however our overall turnover rate is 5% less than the same time last year at 15%. We have a similar number of social workers in the service, who are holding 459 fewer children on their caseloads as in November 2018.
- 1.9 MASH continues to see an increase in the number of contacts coming in to the service over the past year. The MASH will continue to work with partners to best

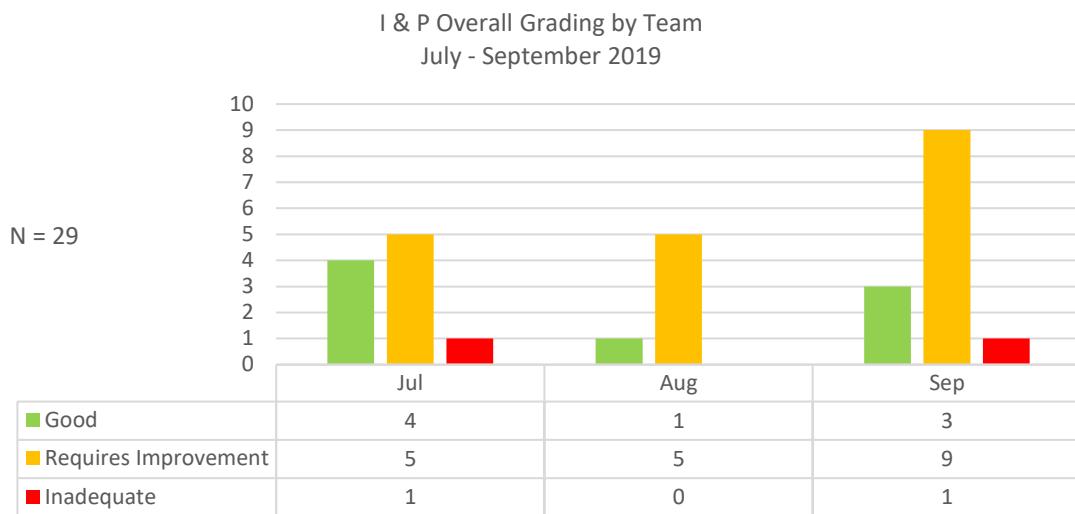
support all professionals in the system to understand the most effective way to support children and families to access the appropriate support. A new London wide MASH dataset is due to launch soon, which will help us to analyse our performance against other London Local Authorities and learn from best practice.

- 1.10 Performance data for Duty and Assessment Teams (DAT) shows that assessment timeliness has remained consistent at 85% within 45 days in November. This is a result of many families being less available over the summer holidays, a period covered by the ChAT, and so less available to social workers completing their assessments. Audit data in DAT shows a reduction to zero of inadequate work. This is in the context of audit activity increasingly targeted at teams or individuals where further development of their practice is required as part of our appreciative enquiry audit approach.



- 1.11 Audits show continued evidence of some good comprehensive child and family assessments which evidence child and parental views well, are child centred and include evidence of multi-agency collaboration. In most cases the history and chronology information continues to be comprehensively gathered and utilised well to support child and family assessment and care planning, and there is evidence of management oversight and in some cases, evidence of thorough highly reflective group supervision, with family history and cultural context well considered. This needs to be more consistent with the rationale for management decision-making and robust review of the progression of plans detailed on the child's file.
- 1.12 There are currently 185 children on Child Protection Plans (CPP), which is a reduction on the previous month. 14 of these CPP's have been open for over a year, meaning we have lower than national and statistical neighbour average numbers of children on CPP's for over a year. ChAT data shows that 48% of children were seen alone at their last social work visit. Closer investigation of this figure shows that when children under 5 – who are not required to be seen alone on a child protection visit - are removed from this count, the figure rises to 87% of children seen alone, which is an improvement on the previous month's data

- 1.13 Between July-September 2019 29 audits were completed on cases held in the I&P teams. 8 were graded overall Good, 19 Required Improvement and 2 were graded Inadequate. Audits found the quality of CIN planning and casework continues to be variable. There is evidence of some strong comprehensive CIN plans which make good use of the Signs of Safety framework and of regular CIN meetings taking place. Audits found evidence of some excellent child protection casework, swift response to risk and robust child protection planning. Conferences take place timely and mostly produce robust CP plans. Children are mostly seen regularly and core group meetings and activity would be strengthened by ensuring they take place consistently.



- 1.14 Since the last CES report, where we highlighted activity in reviewing care plans, with one of the factors leading to the reviewing of care plans being that we demand higher quality care for our children and young people which had in some instances resulted in a need for children to move placements. This explained an increase in the number of children experiencing 3 or more placement moves to 36. Now that this work is being completed there has been a reduction to 33 in young people with three or more placement moves. For a significant proportion of these young people, the placement moves are connected to risk management. Workers are being proactive in moving young people where there is a safeguarding risk connected to exploitation in the local area, and the missing protocol is being utilised for these vulnerable adolescents to understand the complexities of their lives and how to safely house and support them.
- 1.15 We have completed a review of return home interviews (RHIs), following the reporting of a low rate (13%) of interviews offered and a high rate (88%) not recorded in the August performance data. The ChAT is now showing that in 74% of missing incidents, the young person is offered an RHI. Of those young people not offered an interview, 52% did not require one due to them technically being 'absent' or returning to placements after curfew. This figure is relative to placements having policies to report young people as 'missing' when they return after curfew. Another 17% of young people not offered an RHI have frequent missing episodes and so have specific arrangements for the frequency of RHIs defined in their care plan.

- 1.16 Included in appendix 2 is the comprehensive Corporate Parenting Annual Report, which includes our performance across the year against our corporate parenting statutory responsibilities, which Members are asked to scrutinise. Members are also asked to note the attachments in appendices 4 and 5, which offer the most up to date guidance and information for councils on their corporate parenting duties and support for care leavers.

2. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Members are asked to consider and scrutinise the work of Children and Young People's Services, and to fulfil the council's statutory obligations in this regard.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED

- 3.1 Not applicable.

4. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

- 4.1 Not applicable.

5. IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION

5.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance

- 5.1.1 The delivery of good services to children and families 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 2022.
- 5.1.2 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.

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

- 5.2.1 There are no additional financial implications arising directly from this report.
- 5.2.2 Medium Term Financial Savings (MTFS) for 2018 - 2020 were 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 was revised to £4.409m in the 2018/19 Policy & Resource Committee Business Planning Report.

- 5.2.3 Medium Term Financial Savings for 2019/2020 are on track to be delivered.
- 5.2.4 More detailed information on financial performance is provided to Financial Performance and Contracts Committee.

5.3 Legal and Constitutional References

- 5.3.1 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.
- 5.3.2 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.

5.4 Risk Management

5.4.1 Children and Young People's Plan 2023

- 5.4.2 The forward plan for Children and Young People plan is being reviewed and reporting will re-commence the next quarter.
- 5.4.3 A new Child Poverty strategy is being developed to tackle the issue in the borough. Our previous child poverty strategy was set out in the Children and Young People's Plan 2016-20 and supported Barnet's family friendly vision which is focused on making the borough an even better place for all families to live. The new plan captures the progress against previous priorities and actions and highlights a renewed commitment to improving outcomes for children, young people and families. It has been agreed to retain the existing priorities while strengthening actions to tackle child poverty in the borough. The new strategy will be presented to the Children and Young People's Partnership Board for approval in Q1 2020.
- 5.4.4 The Barnet Children and Young People's Partnership has undertaken to develop a new Autism Strategy, which will detail how we will support children and young people with Autism over the next few years. We are currently in the middle of gathering data and feedback from practitioners, parent-carers and young people, as to the experience and reach of services currently, and where we need to be in the future. A draft strategy will be available in early 2020 and will be shared across the partnership and service users for review and comment.

5.4.5 Make Your Mark is a national consultation run by the British Youth Council, which orders the ten issues as voted on by the Members of Youth Parliament, to be placed on the annual ballot. Voting takes place every September, this year Barnet received 12,399 votes, with Put an end to Knife Crime being voted as the top devolved issue and the UK issue being Protect the Environment which happens to be the same as the regional results for London. The five issues which were prioritised from all the results across the UK and taken to the House of Commons to be debated were; Protect the Environment, Put an End to Knife Crime, Mental Health, Tackling Hate Crime and Curriculum to Prepare us for Life. The results of the debate will be released early 2020.

5.5 Equalities and Diversity

- 5.5.1 The 2010 Equality Act outlines the provisions of the Public-Sector Equalities Duty which requires Public Bodies to have due regard to the need to:
- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
 - advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups
 - foster good relations between people from different groups
- 5.5.2 The broad purpose of this duty is to integrate considerations of equality into day business and keep them under review in decision making, the design of policies and the delivery of services
- 5.5.3 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.
- 5.5.4 Children and young people from minority ethnic groups account for 52%, compared with 30% in the country. More referrals are received for families from minority ethnic groups than from white families, who make up 26% of contacts into the MASH. The percentages of children and young people from minority ethnic groups who receive statutory social care services account for 57% of Children in Need cases, 59% 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%) as at May 2019.
- 5.5.5 Boys are overrepresented in most parts of the statutory system. The majority of contacts received into the MASH are for males aged between 11 and 15, and overall 51% of contacts are for boys versus 45% for females (4% other). 52% of assessments are for boys, and 52% of children on child protection plans are boys. For children looked after, boys are overrepresented (60%) due to most UASC being male (88%).

5.6 Corporate Parenting

5.8.1 Please refer to the Corporate Parenting Annual Report appendix. The report seeks to inform Members about the progress and outcomes for children in care and care leavers in Barnet for the period April 2018 - March 2019. It incorporates the Annual Independent Reviewing Officer report, the Annual Adoption Report and the Annual Fostering Report.

5.7 Consultation and Engagement

5.7.1 Consultation and engagement with children and young people is central to social work practice and service improvement across the Safeguarding Partnership.

5.7.2 The Service User Engagement Strategy is well embedded across the partnership, feedback from service users is collated through telephone surveys, #BOP meetings, self-assessments, parent and carer forums and through our complaints and compliments process. 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.

5.7.3 There continues to be an increase in the percentages of service users who are satisfied with our Interventions, communication, and workers. Service Users commented on the following;

- Intervention: overall, Service Users were generally happy with our intervention, with a few describing our service as 'Brilliant' and commending us for helping make positive changes in their lives.
- Communication: feedback indicated Service Users are still generally satisfied with the way we communicate with them, commenting that they felt listened to and that they were happy that their views were taken on board. Overall, an improvement to previous reports, parents/carers they were mainly happy with the level of information provided in preparation for conferences and meetings.
- Workers: they respondents were generally appreciative of our workers, commenting mainly on their supportiveness, empathy and professionalism, which is also an improving theme to previous quarters.

5.7.4 Areas for improvement are mainly concentrated around supporting families, children and young people with their anxiety and 'fear' of social care services; which were negated after working with us. Managing this anxiety at an earlier stage is likely to impact on the overall impact of our work with them.

5.7.5 The bi-annual Youth Perception Survey went out to tender in August and Opinion Research Services have been appointed to undertake the survey, which will involve face to face interviews with 500 young people across Barnet to understand what is important to them and which areas the Council and its partners should prioritise. The interviews will be taking place in November and December. The annual Children in Care survey was also launched at the end of October. This is an online survey that seeks to understand what the key issues are for children in care.

5.7.6 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 (SUE) agenda within their respective areas.

- 5.7.7 The SUE report for quarter 1 considers feedback from 641 young people and parents/carers receiving support from our Early Help and statutory social care teams. This quarter has seen a significant increase in the proportion of respondents who were satisfied with our interventions. Service users felt that communication was effective and that they were listened to, and they appreciated their workers, commenting on their supportiveness, empathy and compassion. We continue to work across our quality assurance and training and development systems to ensure learning from service user feedback is used to inform future service delivery.

5.8 Insight

- 5.9.1 Insight data will continue to be regularly collected and used in monitoring the progress and impact of the Children and Young People's Plan and to shape ongoing improvement activity.

6 Background Papers

- 6.1 Barnet's Corporate Parenting Pledge to Children in Care and Care Leavers (2016):
[https://www.barnet.gov.uk/dam/cr:c33f12a5-86d9-4215-9c89-a8c82675fba4/Pledge%20for%20Children%20in%20Care%202016%20\(digital\).pdfnce](https://www.barnet.gov.uk/dam/cr:c33f12a5-86d9-4215-9c89-a8c82675fba4/Pledge%20for%20Children%20in%20Care%202016%20(digital).pdfnce)