

Barnet Family Services

# Self Evaluation 2019



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# Introduction

## About Barnet

### Our population

- With 394,000 residents, we have the largest population in London, with 23.9% aged under 16 (London average 22.65)
- The BME population in Barnet is 38.7%, and over 180 languages are spoken in our primary schools
- We have an employment rate of 71.4%, below the London average of 74.2%, and the average income is £50k, higher than the outer London average of £44k
- There are 70.5 crimes per 1000 people, below the London average of 92.9 per 1000

### Education outcomes for children and young people

- All secondary school pupils, and 94% of primary school pupils are educated in good or outstanding schools
- We are 1<sup>st</sup> nationally in Progress 8 scores, and 2<sup>nd</sup> nationally in both Attainment 8 and percentage of pupils achieving a A-C pass in English and Maths
- Our A level results place us 7<sup>th</sup> nationally for pupils with 3 or more A grades at GCE/Applied GCE A Level and Double Awards, and the percentage of students achieving grades AAB or better at GCE A Level, Applied GCE A Level and Double Award A Level

### The children and young people we work with

- The percentage of children at secondary school in receipt of free school meals is in line with the national average of 13.2%, in nursery and primary the percentage of Barnet children is higher at 16.7% against 14.5% nationally
- There are fewer children in out of work households, 9.3%, than the national average of 14%, and there are fewer children in low income families in Barnet at 13.5% against the national average of 16.8%
- Dental problems occur in 23.3% of Barnet children under 5 compared to 24.1% nationally, but there are more obese children in Barnet at 20%, than the national average of 18.2%
- 52% of children and young people in Barnet are from black and minority ethnic groups, compared with 30% across England, and 52% of primary and 38.2% of secondary school pupils speak English as an additional language

### Future trends

- Barnet is forecast to have the largest number of children of any London borough by 2020

- 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
- Projections suggest that by 2025, the population of children and young people in Colindale will be the highest of any ward, although the wards with the highest proportions of young people aged 0-19 years old in 2025 are projected to be: Golders Green (32%), Edgware (30%) and Burnt Oak (29%)
- The overall number of children and young people with SEN statements or Education, Health and Care Plans rose by 26% between 2014 and 2017 and is expected to rise by a further 20% between 2017 and 2025

## About Family Services

During the local authority's last inspection in May 2019, which was under the Inspecting Local Authority Children's Services (ILACs) framework, services in Barnet were judged to be good across all criteria: The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families, the experiences and progress of children who need help and protection, the experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers, and overall effectiveness. This judgement followed an improvement journey of almost two years, which was the outcome of the 2017 children's services inspection where services for children in Barnet were found to be inadequate.

We remain committed to continuous improvement, and our aim is to make Barnet the most Family Friendly Borough by 2020. The strategy to achieve this is to focus on developing resilience in families, children and our workforce. Resilience is defined as:

**"The ability to bounce back from stress and adversity and take on new challenges, leading to better outcomes"<sup>1</sup>**

Resilience-based practice is applicable to children, families and the workforce. It applies to all service areas within Family Services and builds on foundations that are already in place. Our Practice Framework is comprised of resilience and strength based tools, methods and approaches that have been integrated for use in day to day practice to improve children's circumstances and outcomes.

The role that Barnet council and its partners play in the life of children and their families provides a unique opportunity to promote and embed resilience. Resilience based practice sits at the heart of improving outcomes for children and young people; an approach that is based on looking for strengths and opportunities to build on, rather than for issues or problems to treat. This approach is being embedded across the partnership.

We have worked with UNICEF as part of our ambition to be recognised as a UNICEF Child Friendly Community in 2023. Several core outcomes have been identified, which form the basis for our Children and Young People's Plan 2019-2023:

### **Family and Belonging**

Families and children can be together and be part of a community that encourages resilience

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<sup>1</sup> Pearson & Hall, 2006, adapted

## **Safe and Secure**

Children and young people are safe and protected from harm

## **Education and Learning**

Children and young people can learn about the world around them

## **Culture**

Our attitudes and behaviours enhance the way we work with and for children and young people

## **Cooperation and Leadership**

We include children and young people in decision making

## **Communication**

Information is shared effectively to children, young people and families across the borough

## **Health and Wellbeing**

Children are supported to achieve a healthy start in life, enjoy a healthy lifestyle and to build resilience

## **Leadership and Governance**

Leaders have ensured 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. Our Children and Young People's Plan 2019-2023 presents this vision for Family Services and the partnership going forward following the Ofsted inspection in May 2019, during which inspectors noted that:

"Senior leaders have developed mature relationships with partner agencies, supported by robust oversight by the Barnet Safeguarding Children Board and its sub groups."

The partnership continues to demonstrate a commitment to cooperation and leadership. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 replaced Local Safeguarding Children Boards with new arrangements that place a shared and equal duty on the local authority, the police and the Clinical Commissioning Group to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. In line with the guidance published in Working Together 2018, the statutory partners agreed and published their arrangements in June 2019.

Political leadership has been engaged in improvement activity through the independently chaired Improvement Board, up to the Ofsted inspection in May 2019, the Children's Education and Safeguarding Committee, and the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel along with corporate parenting training. Councillors have been involved with events for young people across the Borough, including children in care celebration events. Ofsted inspectors found, during their May 2019 inspection, that:

"Time and energy have been invested in ensuring that political leaders and members understand the importance of children's social care. This deeper understanding has led to more robust scrutiny and challenge."

Corporate Plan priority ‘Improving services for children and young people and ensuring the needs of children are considered in everything we do’ incorporates the Children and Young People’s Plan outcomes:

- Family and Belonging
- Safe and Secure
- Health and Wellbeing

Corporate Plan priority ‘Ensuring we have good schools and enough school places so all children have access to a great education’ incorporates the Children and Young People’s Plan outcome:

- Education and Learning

Corporate Plan priority ‘Ensuring we are a family friendly borough’ incorporates the Children and Young People’s Plan priorities:

- Culture
- Communication
- Cooperation and Leadership

These are regularly monitored by Members at the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee, and by the Barnet Safeguarding Children Partnership.

In January 2019, the Council Management Team partnership board adopted a set of shared priorities to work on collaboratively, where it was agreed that Children and Young People would be a golden thread that would be considered when addressing each of the priority areas. The first priority was ‘social cohesion’, and comprised a high visibility marketing campaign celebrating Barnet’s diverse communities and the contribution they make to life in the borough, as well as projects that will further support cohesion in the Barnet. The marketing campaign showcased two projects that support Children and Young People.

#### **Focus for the year ahead**

- Ensure members are better informed about unregulated placements
- Ensure members attend relevant training as corporate parents
- Ensure Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel includes a range of activities which Member participate in to gather the best understanding of their roles

## **Knowing Ourselves**

### **Quality Assurance**

#### **Conference and Review**

The Independent Reviewing Service is managed within the Safeguarding, Quality Assurance and Workforce Development Service to ensure that the Conference Reviewing Officers (CROs) and Independent Reviewing Officer’s (IRO’s) input and contribution to social work

practice and care planning for children and young people is autonomous from case holding service areas.

The IRO team is comprised of four permanent full-time Independent Reviewing Officers, and the CRO team 5 Independent Review Officers and are managed by the Principal Independent Reviewing Officer (a new role to enhance levels of support and scrutiny). The service also manages one Fostering Independent Reviewing Officer (FIRO) who chairs annual reviews of foster carers. Additionally, there are two contracted IROs who are commissioned to provide additional capacity when required and one dedicated administrator who supports the team.

### Strengths and achievements

For the 325 children that were in care in the reporting period 2018/19; the data and performance indicators show:

- 82% of Initial Child Protection Conferences were in time
- 100% of Child Protection Conference Reviews were held in time
- 93.6% of Looked After Children Reviews were held within statutory timescales
- 94% of children and young people participated in their Children in Care reviews

Audits and Ofsted monitoring visits over the past year, have identified a need to increase visibility of the IRO ‘footprint’ on children’s records so that their involvement in Care Planning is consistently evident on children’s records. This includes; pre-review visits, clear and comprehensive minutes of meetings and evidence of challenge and escalation when this is required. During the start of 2019, there was an increase in the number of midway meetings and midway visits taking place, this has been strengthened by ensuring dates for midway reviews and visits are routinely scheduled by IRO’s during CiC reviews. When a midway review or visit takes place, the detail of the discussion is placed on the child’s record. In addition, the Principal Reviewing Officer attends the weekly Permanence Tracker Meeting and Permanency Planning Panel; this enables the IRO service to contribute in planning, provide positive feedback and/or raise concerns about progression of permanency for the children and young people who are discussed. In their May 2019 inspection, Ofsted inspectors found:

“In most cases, oversight of children’s progress by independent reviewing officers (IROs) is good and is recorded in children’s records. Statutory reviews are held regularly, with increasing use of mid-point reviews. IROs are appropriately challenging and escalate concerns when necessary, which has resulted in better planning for children.”

Over the year there has been increased consultation activity taking place between social work teams and IRO’s in the care planning process. Audits more consistently find that the voice of the child is stronger and evident in their care plans and our performance data is more strongly reflecting that every effort is being made to enable children and young people to participate in their reviews and contribute to their care plans and pathway plans directly or indirectly. When there is a need to drive improvements in a child’s care planning there is

clearer evidence of IRO challenge. This is recorded as discussions, emails and/or face-to-face discussion with the social work teams and in escalation reports.

Feedback from 61 families between January and March 2019 indicates that Social Workers and CROs were involving young people and their parents or carers in the conference reviewing process. 85% of respondents agreed that they actively participated in producing their plans, and 82% were satisfied that reports and assessments were fair and included both the families' strengths and weaknesses. 90% of respondents felt listened to and 89% stated that their views were heard and recorded.

Pre-conference meetings, usually with the CRO, were useful, with 92% of respondents expressing this view, however we have more work to do in preparing our families for conferences. 62% of families had received a leaflet explaining the purpose of the conference and 64%, or 39 out of the 61 of those asked had seen the Social Worker's report before the conference.

### Focus for the year ahead

- Continue working with children and young people in the quarterly workshops/forums being held to hear their views and suggestions about how we can improve services provided to them and encourage their meaningful participation
- Ensure that all IRO's develop their confidence and capacity to drive high quality care planning activity and to monitor the effectiveness of children's plans by providing respectful and robust challenge to professionals when plans are not achieving good outcomes for children, and to do so consistently
- Ongoing live observation of the IRO's chairing reviews to give feedback and support learning.
- IRO's to begin to deliver workshops supported by the Principal Reviewing Officer and a Practice Development Worker on children in care processes and care planning. The workshops will help establish a better understanding of the practice expectations and process and improve the written quality of assessments and plans.

### Audit

A variety of audits across predefined areas of practice, which form our regular audit activity are completed. Themed audits are decided quarterly based on strategic priorities or identified areas for learning and are allocated to auditors (QA Officers, IRO/CRO's, Team Managers) for completion. Multi-agency audits are undertaken to examine and improve cross-agency working in key areas of practice where multi-agency working is critical to effective safeguarding. Key learning points are disseminated across the service and where appropriate across the local partnership. Impact is monitored through routine case tracking and analysis, quality assurance approaches and the multi-agency Performance & Quality Assurance Sub-Group. In their 2019 inspection report, Ofsted inspectors found that:

"There is a clear and established system of audits underpinning the quality assurance process. Audit findings are collated into quality assurance reports that highlight strengths and areas for development and next steps."

## Strengths and achievements

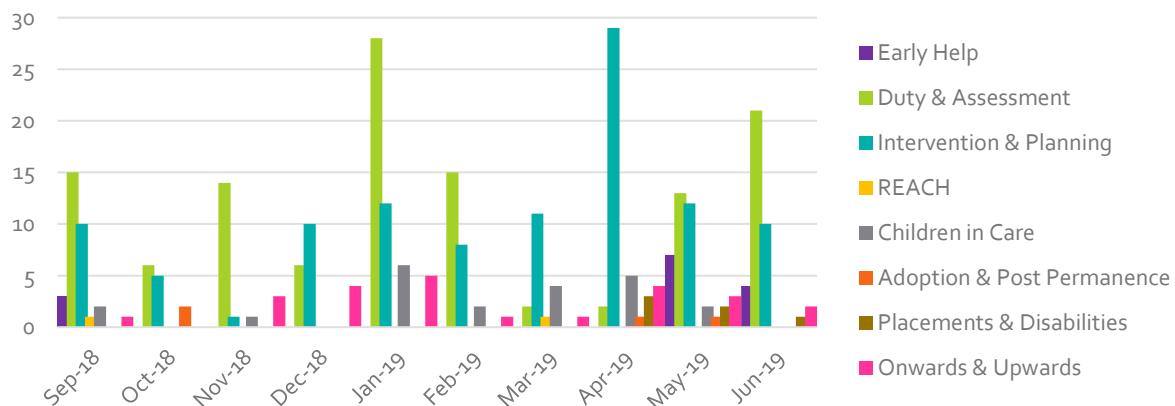
The cycle of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) audit forms the foundation of our quality assurance activity. AI is a conversation methodology that has a particular way of asking questions by seeking out ‘the best of what’ has occurred in any given system. The aim is to build on self-identified strengths and to practice asking questions that strengthen capacity to reflect, share best practice, innovation and to build the future around what works. This audit approach was implemented in January 2019, and in May 2019, Ofsted inspectors noted that:

Audits have rightly had a focus on compliance in the local authority's improvement journey. More recent audits have moved to a fuller consideration of the impact of work on outcomes for children, although the approach is at an early stage and needs to be further embedded.

Quality Assurance Officers complete one audit each month from their linked Social Work Team case list; the Team Manager completes one every two months. The QA Officer and Team Manager meet to compare and reflect on learning outcomes from the audits undertaken and feedback practice learning into supervision, team meetings and workforce development activities. In our system it is important that all managers are able to understand ‘what good looks like’ in Barnet linking to our Resilience Philosophy and Practice Standards to support this.

Data on the frequency of audit by service area shows there is increased activity in more specialist areas that were less of a focus during the Ofsted monitoring process. Our learning in effective auditing and quality assurance is strengthening our understanding of work across the system. We are currently working with colleagues at Research and Practice to develop training around child sexual abuse following an audit review of this earlier in the year, and we will continue to identify opportunities to complete similar exercises in the next 12 months.

Frequency of Audit by Service



### **Focus for the year ahead**

- Continue to extend our audit programme into Early Help and Youth Offending services.
- Continue to conduct thematic reviews will help us to identify areas of good practice, and to support the development of skills and knowledge in the organisation.
- Build a multi-agency framework of audit activity that provides reassurance across the partnership of effective practice and shapes multi-agency learning opportunities

### **Performance Data**

During the Ofsted monitoring process, the central monthly reporting data has been reported through ‘Performance Matters’, and reports 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. Further challenge was 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. This was an effective framework, necessary to have in place throughout the Ofsted monitoring period, and inspectors noted in their May 2019 findings that:

“Performance management systems capture a wide range of relevant data across the organisation. This data not only provides senior managers with aggregated data across the service but also provides team level data, which enables team and service managers to identify any performance shortfalls emerging in their area of responsibility, and to respond accordingly.”

Learning from our work with our improvement partners at Essex council, we are continuing stocktake meetings during which redesigned quality assurance reports will be used as tools to understand operational strengths and weaknesses across the system.

### **Focus for the year ahead**

- We are in the process of redesigning our data intelligence framework. We are developing a more integrated style of reporting which will triangulate key data indicators from each service area with audit findings.
- Ensure that all managers across the system are confident in understanding and explaining their performance data, and use it to drive practice improvements
- Drive service developments using intelligence gathered from data and performance information in relation to local needs and trends

### **Divisional Plans**

Each division in Family Services – Commissioning, Education Strategy & Partnerships, Early Help & Children in Need of Help and Protection, and Corporate Parenting – has developed

their own divisional plan which sets out the actions for the division to deliver against the Children and Young People's Plan. Reports on the progress against these plans are provided to the Children's Partnership Board and the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee.

## 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. Team Managers can commission individualised support from Practice Development Workers to work alongside Social Workers to improve practice. This has created a non-blaming culture with an emphasis on the use of teachable moments.

The function of the Practice Development Worker role to provide bespoke and targeted learning opportunities to address identified gaps in practice identified in the July 2017 Ofsted inspection has been achieved.

### Focus for the year ahead

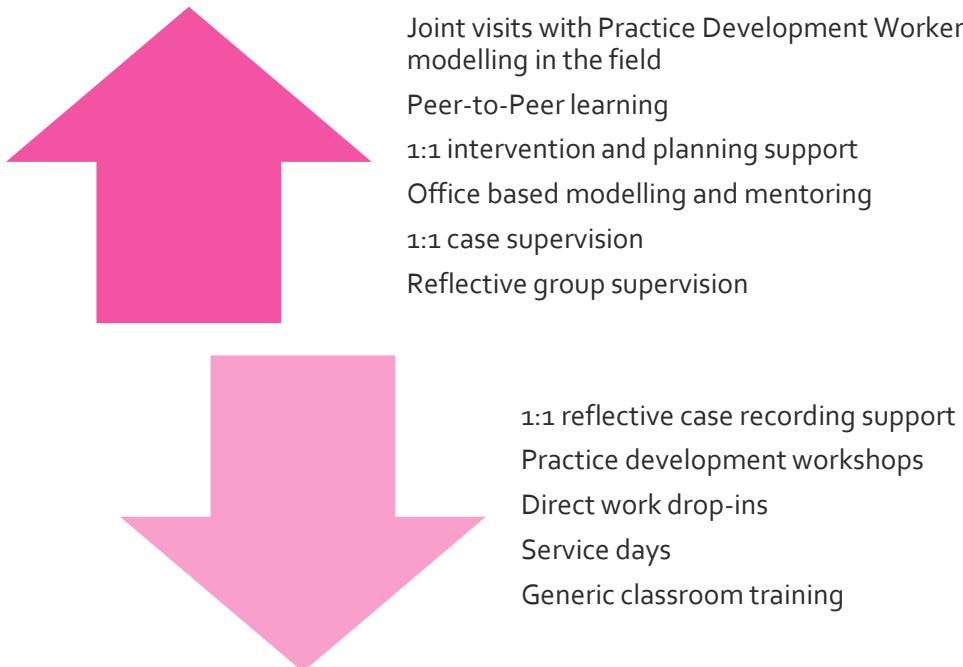
- Role is being developed to include more responsibility for strategic work streams, BCPA facilities and projects. Each role will retain their core functions of providing practice development and learning opportunities to the workforce across Family Services but take a lead for consultation with Heads of Services, overall development and analysis of ongoing workforce training needs and the implementation of agreed training programmes in different service areas:
  - Students and AYSE
  - Early Help, Youth Offending and Clinical Services
  - Social Worker and Advanced Practitioner
  - Otherwise Qualified, and workforce training programme

### Training

Overall, the training and practice development offer has been focused and targeted in supporting the children's workforce to develop the necessary skills to deliver good quality interventions to children and their families, this has been effective in some core areas of practice that had been identified as in need of improvement. The programme of learning will be continued into 2019/20 to support the workforce to further embed learning and ensure there is reach to practitioners who may not have accessed some areas of training and that new staff joining the organisation are able to access the core offer.

From September 2018 to September 2019, there have been 365 scheduled training and development events, ranging from whole service days, multi-agency briefings and specialist foster carers training to leadership and management, systemic practice, systemic leadership and signs of safety training programmes. 45 of these training sessions were for Early Years practitioners, and 30 were specialist foster carer training sessions. Feedback from attendees, alongside analysis of audit outcomes, provides us with an indication of the most

versus the least effective in terms of worker engagement and training transfer, illustrated below:



A flexible and responsive approach to workforce development activity will be maintained in the year ahead to ensure emerging practice issues and identified gaps in skills or knowledge are responded to. The recognised strength of the Practice Development Worker approach will ensure areas of practice that are identified as in need of continued improvement can be targeted to drive change. As the workforce stabilises with increasing numbers of permanent staff and practitioner skill continue to embed and strengthen, the training offer will develop and become more sophisticated to equip the organisation with a workforce comprised of a diverse range of transferable skill, knowledge and practice expertise.

#### Focus for the year ahead

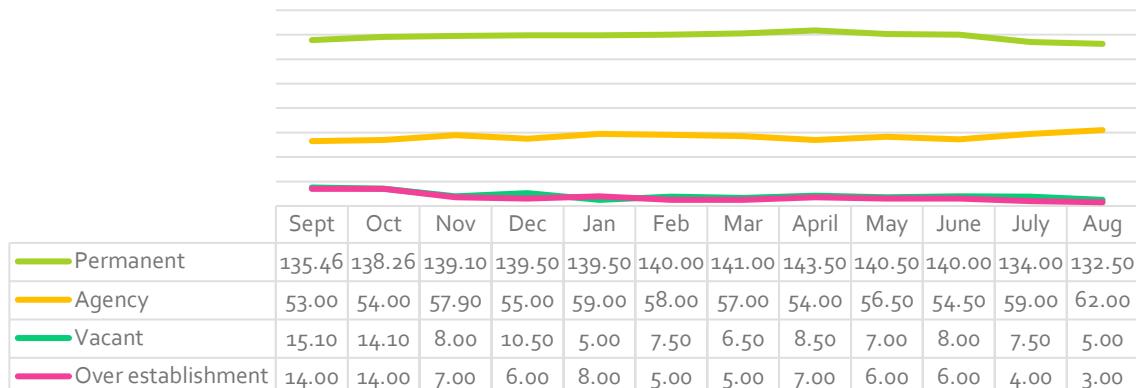
- Continual evaluation of the relevance, quality and impact of the workforce development offer to ensure training is of a good standard, is cost effective, is meeting the development needs of the workforce and is demonstrating capacity across the workforce to deliver consistently high quality services to children and families living in Barnet.
- Produce a Learning Needs Analysis to inform the forward planning of training and development needs of the workforce
- Provide training that supports identification, assessment and planning for high risk areas including sexual abuse, trigger/toxic trio, neglect and culturally specific abuse including FGM.
- Provide training that enables practitioners to undertake effective and comprehensive parenting assessments and interventions to address neglect.

- Support the continued embedding and roll out of systemic practice training to the children's workforce
- Develop with partners multi-agency training that supports joint approaches to assessment, intervention and planning.
- Training that promotes and facilitates career progression

## Recruitment

The teams have benefited from the retention and recruitment of newly qualified social workers who have successfully completed their ASYE and who are now filling some of the vacant agency filled social work posts. We are aiming to recruit 14 AYSE social workers this year and it is anticipated that that the new (and large) cohort of student social workers this year will repeat this pattern next year as part of our 'grow your own' approach. The current projected social work vacancy rate for December 2019 is 34 although, this may reduce further following the launch of a new recruitment campaign in September which will coincide with an article in The Guardian promoting the positive improvements made across Children's Services.

Social Worker posts



Data shows that we have reduced the amount of over establishment social workers over the past year as the need for additional capacity for improvement focused activities has diminished. Within current social work vacancies there are 12 posts being held for the Newly Qualified Social Workers who are due to complete their Assessed and Supported Year of Employment at the end of 2019. There are also a small number of social work posts being held for staff affected by the adoption regionalisation. 10 permanent social workers moved on from front line services following the successful inspection outcomes, these posts are currently filled by agency staff.

## Performance & Outcomes

### MASH

#### Summary

The MASH has sustained improvements throughout the year, with the Ofsted monitoring visit in November 2018 finding 'strong practice', with thresholds well understood and decisions

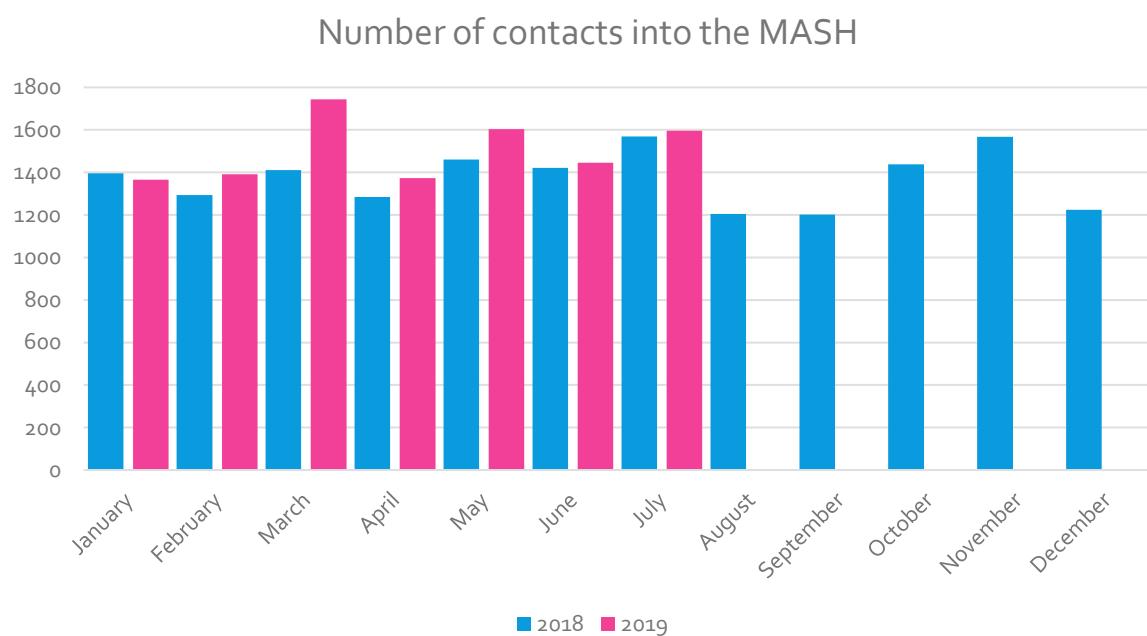
timely for children. On their return for the full inspection in May 2019, inspectors confirmed that:

"Partners have a good understanding of thresholds when making referrals. Thresholds are applied consistently for children in need of help and protection. The 'front door' and the MASH provide a timely and effective response to contacts by professionals and members of the public. Contacts in the MASH are responded to quickly, according to the level of need and risk in the presenting information."

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

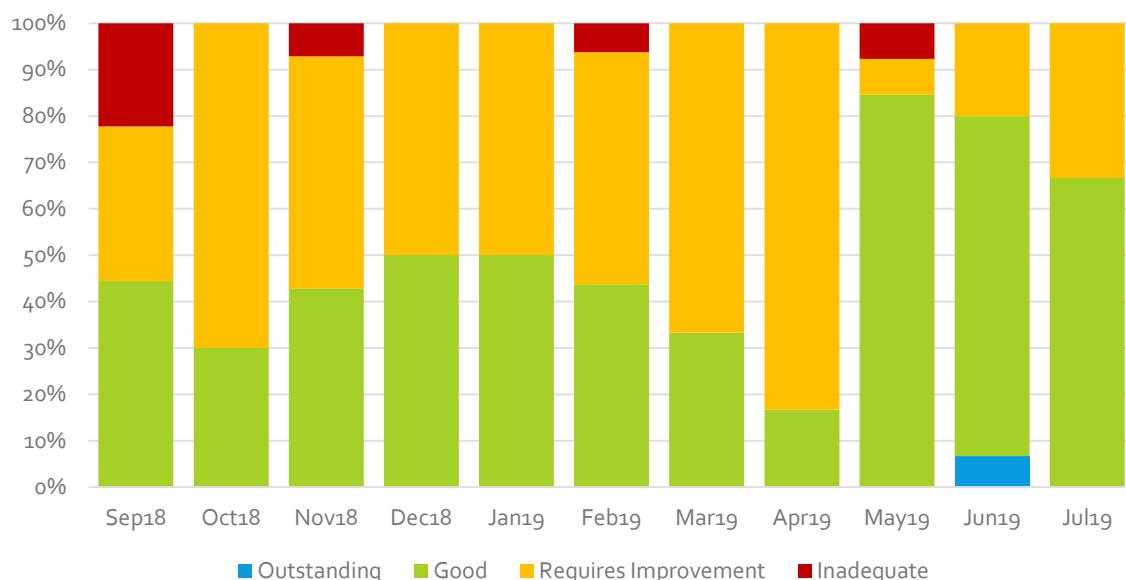
MASH has seen a consistent increase in contacts to the service over the past year and this is reflective of the broader understanding of the service and improved partnerships which is generating higher volumes of information requests. The re-modelling of 0-19 Early Help Services has also led to Early Help referrals being processed through the MASH. This is reflected in the high levels of Blue and Green contacts, the latter of which has increased by 46% since June 2018.



The work that we have been doing with the partnership in launching the Barnet Continuum of

Help and Support has improved the quality of referrals, as illustrated in our audit data with the majority of sampled MASH referrals now graded as good.

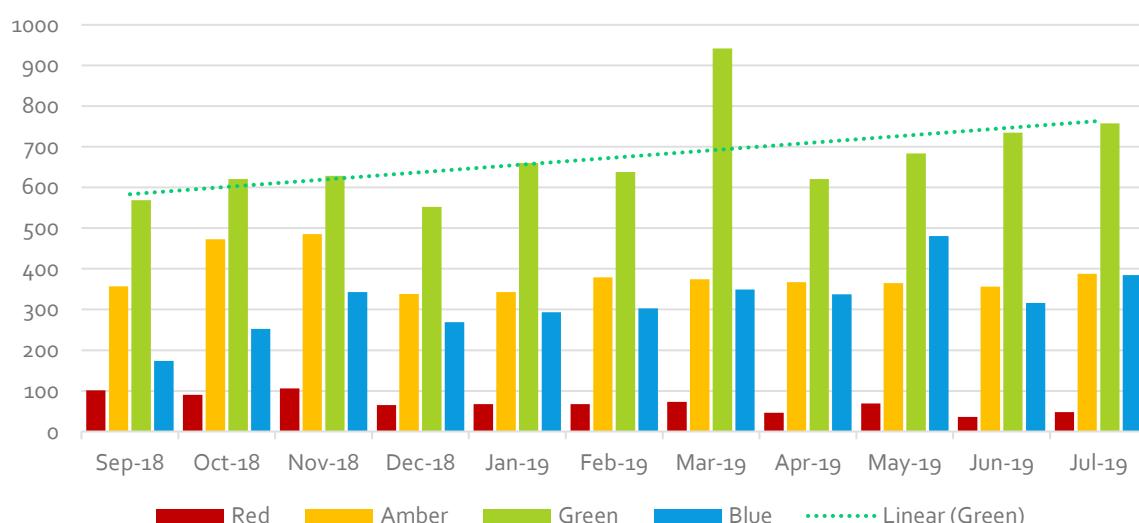
MASH Audit Domain 'Referral Information'



#### Focus for the year ahead

- Analysis of MASH contact BRAG ratings shows that the number and proportion of green contacts is rising. 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.
- Develop opportunities for increased integration with adult safeguarding arrangements when the adult and children's MASH co-locate in Spring 2020

MASH Contacts by Final BRAG



- Utilise the new London wide MASH dataset to analyse performance against other London LA's

## Early Help

### Summary

Barnet's Early Help Services have been reconfigured and transformed over the past year to create three locality based 0-19 Early Help Hubs that co-locate professionals in Early Years, Family Support and Youth Work alongside a range of partner agencies delivering preventative and targeted services to children, young people and their families. In Barnet our Early Help services are underpinned by our resilience approach which focuses on the need for children to:

- Have safe and trusted relationships
- Be stable and secure
- Achieve and have aspirations in education
- Benefit from positive friendships
- Develop individual talents and interests
- Believe in themselves and their ability to achieve their ambitions in life

The Barnet Safeguarding Children Partnership Board maintains oversight of the overall effectiveness of the multi-agency partnership. The 0-19 Strategic Board meets quarterly and steers the multi-agency partnership in the delivery of services, provides annual reports to the BSCP and reviews the outputs for the three 0-19 Locality Advisory Boards. The three 0-19 Locality Advisory Boards have been established to engage with local delivery partners, including community representatives and voluntary, community and faith sectors in the delivery and design of local services.

The quality and effectiveness of 0-19 Early Help Services is monitored via regular quality assurance activities including multi-agency audits that will support the identification of strengths and generate learning within the Early Help system. The 0-19 Strategic Board is developing a suite of key performance indicators which will act as shared partnership measures and outcomes, and track the impact of key individual services.

### Strengths and achievements

Our Early Help model seeks to create closer alliance with agencies involved with adults who have caring responsibilities for children including Probation, Adult Mental Health, Domestic Abuse providers and Substance Misuse services in recognition of the need to ensure that interventions at the earliest point should seek to address difficulties in the whole family system and we have also sought to build stronger cohesion with the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) and with universal health and education services to ensure our offer is coherent and organised services around the needs of the whole family, the schools that children attend and the communities that they live within.

Barnet has successfully bid to NHS England to be a trailblazer of Mental Health Support Teams which will train and locate 8 Education Mental Health Practitioners in schools within the West Early Help Locality. The funding increases capacity for early access to mental health support and will further strengthen partnerships across Barnet Integrated Clinical Services, Schools and 0-19 Early Help Services.

Early Help delivery is coordinated through a multi-agency panel that meets weekly and allocates a skilled and trusted Lead Professional to coordinate a multi-disciplinary network around the child and family. The co-ordinated effort harnesses professional expertise by building a Team Around the Family and ensures that children's needs are considered in the context of their whole family situation and their environmental and community context. In their inspection findings in May 2019, Ofsted noted that:

"Children and their families benefit from a good early help offer and have access to a broad range of preventive and targeted services... Partnership working across the early help hubs is strong, with a clear focus on considering the needs of children and their families. Parents and carers are very positive about the impact of services on the wellbeing of them and their children."

There is strong evidence to indicate that the partnership values the interventions provided by the Early Help service and knows how to access them, due to an increase in demand for services. Since the roll out of the hubs, there has been a steady increase in the number of requests into Early Help between July 2018 and July 2019 by 26% into East Central Hub, 45% in South Hub and 42% in the West Hub. These requests have led to a 50% increase in new Early Help Assessments, and at July 2019, there were 399 families with 637 children allocated to a locality team across the hubs.

The Families First (Troubled Families) Programme continues to deliver successful outcomes for children and young people. We have a total of 399 claims left to achieve to get us to 100%. We need to achieve 67 claims a month to hit our target, and with a current claims rate of 90 per month we are therefore projecting to complete the programme 1-2 months early. Partnership secondments from Probation, Westminster Drug Project, RISE, Education Welfare and Health Services are facilitating a stronger level of integrated working with services engaged with parents/carers for children in Early Help. We are awaiting a ministerial decision on the future of the Programme beyond March 2020.

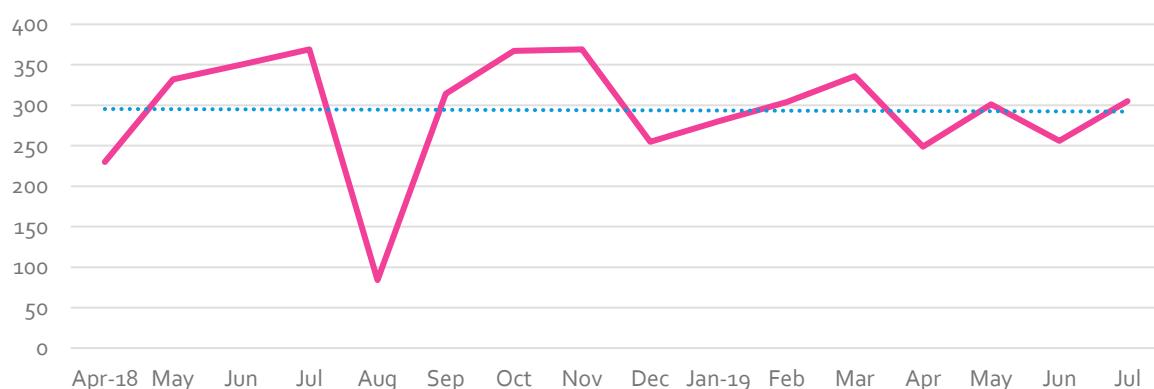
A secondee from RISE has been funded from the Troubled Families Service Transformation Grant, this post is co-located with 0-19 Early Help Services and complements the Parental Conflict training that has been procured to support practitioners in Early Help to work with parents where arguing is disrupting the quality of parenting available to the child(ren). Solace continue to work closely with MASH and Early Help to identify and support women who are victims of domestic abuse. Children's groups are delivered using the AVA approach. The combined range of services are aimed at enabling supported interventions across early help and statutory services and facilitate seamless step-up and down processes. Westminster Drug Project have co-located Hidden Harm workers within MASH and Children's Social Care. The service provides drop-in advice and enables joint assessment visits when parents are identified as using misusing alcohol or illicit substances. This approach enables a rapid and holistic assessment of risk associated with parental drug or alcohol use and ensures support is made available at the earliest point of contact.

## New Early Help Assessments



In the same period there has been a slight reduction in the number of cases transferred to Children's Social Care. This is positive and evidences that the increase in the number of assessments being completed in Early Help is not leading to capacity pressures in Children's Social Care teams, and that professionals working in Early Help are confident in assessing and supporting families within the Early Help framework.

## Transfer to Children's Social Care



### Focus for the year ahead

- Engage parents and young people through consultation and representative attendance at Advisory Boards and user forums to continue to develop the locality model in response to local need
- Deliver preventative programmes through early years settings, primary and secondary schools, aimed at prevention and diversion from exploitation, criminality and violence
- Continue to develop the quality assurance and reporting system for Early Help incorporating learning from increased audit activity and data intelligence in order to drive improvements further
- Strengthen interface with voluntary, community and faith sector providers to ensure a cohesive model

## Vulnerable Adolescents

### Summary

We have maintained a focus in delivering our Vulnerable Adolescents Strategy, and the newly created post Strategic Lead for Partnership Engagement and Vulnerable Adolescents at Risk underlines our ambition to continue to engage the partnership in developing effective pathways for diversion for young people identified as at risk. We have undertaken extensive work with the children's workforce, key partners and schools to strengthen agency collaboration, awareness raising and the implementation of effective risk assessment and management processes.

The Barnet Creative Spaces Project launched in 2018 is funded for 5 years through the Home Office Trusted Relationships grant and forms a key part of the voluntary sector partnership strategy and is designed to provide safe, relational spaces for young people to disclose violent victimisation and to improve the awareness on abuse/exploitation warning signs and confidence in responding to signs. Taking a trusted relationship and asset based approach enables us to engage with young people that do not wish to engage with or disclose to other local services. Key to this are the creative spaces and trusted professionals embedded in the community, delivered by Art Against Knives.MAC-UK support the delivery of psychologically informed interventions in learning spaces for the delivery team, ensuring that staff are supported to understand key psychological theory related to attachment, epistemic trust, community psychology, narrative and mentalisation based approaches.

### Strengths and achievements

The Vulnerable Adolescents Strategy, published in April 2018, outlined the development of a single multi-agency vulnerable adolescents at risk panel (VARP) to join efforts to safeguard young people at risk of criminal and sexual exploitation. The VARP provides operational oversight of risk management arrangements across the partnership. Themes and trends are reported into the Strategic Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) to drive preventative, targeted interventions i.e. whole school approaches and disruption activities in the community. Quarterly Vulnerable Adolescents Community Partnership Meetings hold the strategic planning for service delivery by interrogating the effectiveness of services delivering in the community for this cohort of children and young people. The partnership steers the Trusted Relationships project and coordinates cross-sector working, learning and events to build collaboration and a common understanding of services, pathways and outcomes. This work has now embedded and is supporting the partnership to understand risks to this cohort of young people, with Ofsted inspectors noting in their May 2019 inspection report that:

"The monthly VARP enables good consideration of high-risk individual young people, to better understand the risks and protective factors. Disruptive measures to reduce risks of sexual and other forms of exploitation are clearly identified."

All Social Care teams receive regular 'missing' reports and briefings are held frequently for staff and new starters to ensure learning and awareness is maintained across the landscape of a dynamic workforce. Internal and external partners are provided with regular updates about gang profiles in Barnet along with bi-quarterly intelligence and thematic reporting from strategic MACE, themes from SEAM strategy meetings and police operations. Ofsted

inspectors found evidence that this development work has had a positive impact on the quality of work with vulnerable young people:

"Staff take effective action to reduce risks to children who are considered to be highly vulnerable and at risk of exploitation, including children missing from home, school or care. Workers are tenacious in trying to engage young people who have been missing, making good use of return home interviews. Social workers understand the complexity of risks to children and this is given good consideration in multi-agency meetings and risk assessments."

Art Against Knives continues to see successful outcomes from across their creative community spaces. Between January and March 2019 170 YP engaged across the 4 spaces (Target for the year was 120) and 22 YP have engaged consistently with specialist support outside of session activity. Young people's engagement in these spaces is their choice, and evidences the improvement in their wellbeing, self-esteem, self-efficacy and resilience. The success of the projects is due to the relationships they hold with trusted professionals, who create a safe and inspiring environment. During this period we had 63 new referrals, 51 were self or peer referrals and 12 were referred from external partners in the borough, including Barnet Children's Social Services, and the Youth Offending Team.

Art Against Knives continues to monitor the number of young people engaging in their Creative Safe Spaces as this continues to be much higher than we had predicted. One of the projects is now at risk of being oversubscribed, so we have implemented measures including a new booking system for the music studio to safely manage numbers. We will continue to closely review this progress quarterly and work across the newly established partnership to implement solutions such as fundraising to increase opening hours for the spaces.

Growing Against Violence Education (GAV-Ed) continue to deliver preventative programmes in schools across the borough. The Trusted Relationships funding has enabled this service to reach into Year 6 and raise awareness prior to children transitioning to secondary education.

REACH and Youth Offending Services are now managed under a single line management framework. 85% of children and young people allocated to REACH for social work interventions are also open to the Youth Offending Team. Joining the management framework for this cohort of young people has improved the join up of assessment and planning activities. The Forensic Psychologist attached to the YOT is working across both teams to maximise accessibility of mental health assessment and support.

The 'No Knives, Better Lives' programme continues to be delivered in conjunction with police and the Old Bailey. The programme is targeted to all young people known to have been in possession of an offensive weapon or bladed article and their known associates/friendship groups.

The Pan London Rescue and Response Service is working closely with local services, a worker from the service co-locates with Barnet staff on a regular basis and ensures information is promptly shared when children and young people are arrested or located out of borough and suspected to be exploited and/or involved in 'County Lines' activity.

Serious Incident Risk Meetings (SIRM) are held with key multi-agency partners when an incident of serious youth violence has occurred involving young people aged 10 – 25. The meetings identify risk management strategies and coordinate safety planning; increasingly SIRM's are being held for knife crime victims aged between 18 -24 years. An aftercare and resettlement meeting has been developed to ensure young people are safely transitioned from Youth Offending Services to Probation and Onwards & Upwards Services, as necessary.

### Focus for the year ahead

Two of the improvements identified by Ofsted inspectors relate to the development and continued improvement of our vulnerable adolescents work. We have developed a plan to deliver these which includes:

- An outcome to be developed from the SEAM Strategy Meeting record which clearly sets out the rationale for decision making in respect of the type of Plan that is best placed to meet the child's needs i.e. Child Protection/Child in Need/Child Looked After Plan
- The SEAM Strategy Meeting to be integrated on LCS as a care planning process that will automatically integrate Child Protection/Child in Need/Child Looked After Plans with action plans arising from SEAM Strategy Meetings
- The Vulnerable Adolescents at Risk Panel (VARP) minute taker to ensure that a record of the VARP meeting and the agreed actions are recorded on LCS together with a case note that alerts the Team Manager and Social Worker to the actions agreed and the need for those actions to be incorporated into the child's Assessment, Child Protection Conference, Core Group Meeting, Child in Need Planning Meeting, Reviews and Plan
- The Practice Standards and audit template to be developed to reflect practice expectations for the timely integration of actions arising from VARP and SEAM Strategy Meetings into children's Plans.
- To develop multi-agency transitional safeguarding arrangements for young people requiring support beyond their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday with agencies providing post-18 support.

Additionally to the actions under the improvement plan, we will:

- Share best practice that occurs because of the trusted relationships project, such as capturing and sharing meaningful data from the project evaluation, and how to embed MAC-UK's INTEGRATE principles and co-production with young people into steering/operational groups, council panel meetings and service design and delivery
- We will be releasing our revised training to partners which now includes the principles of trusted relationships and outlines how professionals can and coproduce

creative spaces/activities with young people to build trusted relationships and effect change

- Launch a new children missing education project funded by the Violence Reduction Unit
- Launch the St Christopher's project, a siblings mentoring programme, funded by the Youth Endowment Fund

## Duty & Assessment

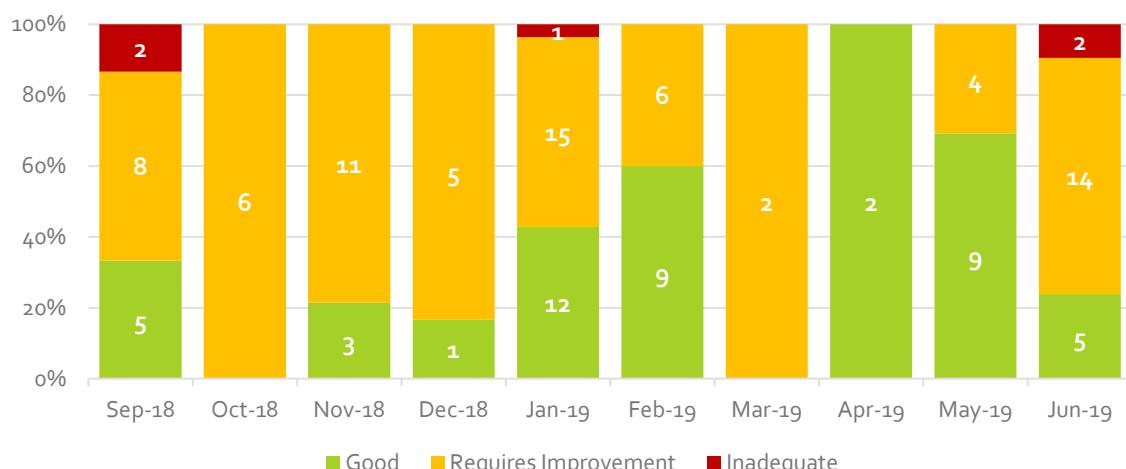
### Summary

The Duty and Assessment service has continued improvements throughout the year, with the Ofsted monitoring visit in November 2018 finding practice 'mostly consistent, appropriately focussed' and that 'social workers know and engage well with children and families'. On their return for the full inspection in May 2019, inspectors confirmed that:

"The vast majority of assessments are timely, comprehensive and of good quality. Children's and family's views, often gathered over a number of visits, are well evidenced and inform assessment outcomes. Assessments provide succinct evidence of risks to children and clear analysis. They demonstrate a good balance of understanding and analysis and are focused on parents' capacity to meet the needs of children."

Audit information shows that the quality of most work is of a good standard or requires improvement to be good. Some audit activity has been targeted at social workers requiring additional support and coaching to improve their practice, as such the requires improvement and inadequate audit outcomes can be directly linked those individuals and teams where practice needs further development. The high proportion of good audits is encouraging and indicates a decisive shift in the quality of work over the past 12 months since the last SEF.

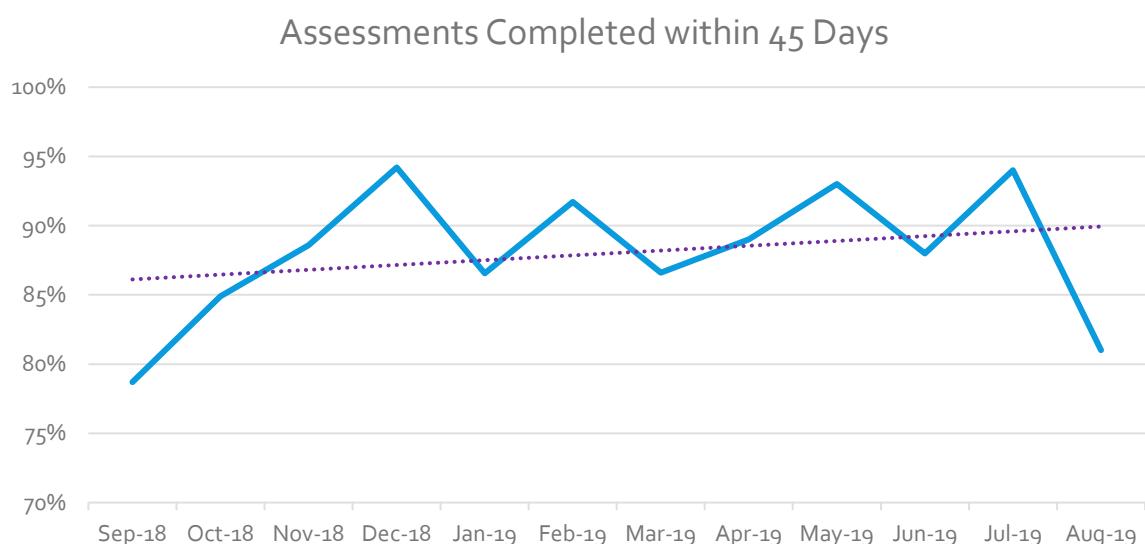
DAT Audit Gradings



To improve the quality of work across the Duty and Assessment Service there has been a consistent focus on ensuring these teams have stable management and staffing arrangements in place and that there is regular and robust oversight of practice, manageable caseloads and a comprehensive workforce development offer in place. This supports delivery of practice from across the statutory partnership that is focussed on the child's needs.

### Strengths and achievements

The average percentage of assessments completed in 45 days over the last year is 88%, with the overall trend heading upwards as we have increased stability in staffing and workers become more confident in producing high quality timely assessments. Assessments that take longer than 45 days evidence management oversight and rationale for a longer assessment period and are closely monitored to prevent drift and delay.

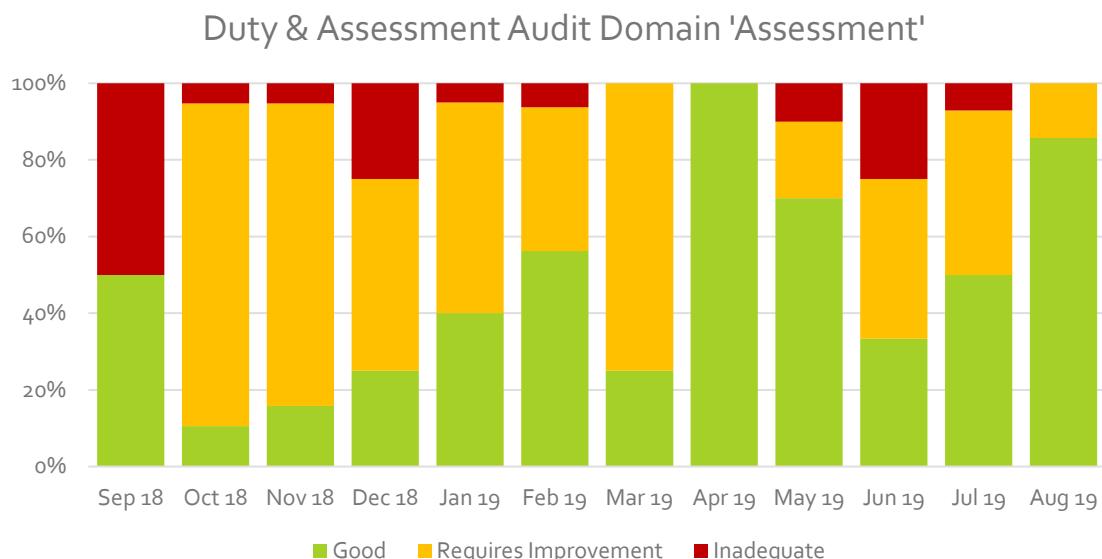


Clinical Practitioner has been supporting the Teams to develop systemic approaches to group supervision which is having a positive impact on practitioners capacity to reflect and remain curious about the children and families they are assessing. This is being consolidated by the systemic training offer for social work team managers and advanced practitioners. Inspectors noted in their May 2019 inspection that:

"Workers make good use of chronologies and family history and show sensitive consideration of culture and ethnicity in their assessments, which results in a good understanding of individual children's needs."

Audit findings in this domain of practice demonstrate that there is good evidence that social workers are using research, engaging children in direct work to ascertain their views and demonstrating greater insight and analysis of risk and need. The audits provide evidence that social workers are mostly collaborating well with other agencies and the impact of reflective group supervision can be seen. Positively, social workers are visiting children regularly and paying good attention to diversity and relationships.

The audits recognise a need for some improved compliance with statutory timescales and demonstration of more sophisticated analysis of family functioning, capacity for change and complex issues i.e. personality disorder, gender identity and child mental health needs. The workforce development programme is responding to these identified learning points.



There has been a consistent drive to improve the quality of Child Protection Procedures and processes, and Strategy Discussions and s47 enquiries have improved in quality and demonstrate increased multi-agency engagement which is having the positive impact of more consistent evidence of proportionate and timely action to safeguard children. In their May 2019 inspection, Ofsted inspectors found that:

"Timely strategy discussions take place when children's needs escalate. Discussions are child-focused, with good consideration of historical factors, and decision-making is clear and appropriate. Strategy meetings are held routinely when young people are missing or are at risk of exploitation."

Specialist support has been commissioned from the domestic abuse charity RISE who undertake risk assessments and interventions for victims and perpetrators of violence (including child on adult violence). The RISE practitioners work alongside our Practice Development Workers to support social workers in gaining new skills and understanding of how to work with families where domestic abuse is present, has improved our assessment and planning work with this cohort. This has been complemented by Trigger Trio training for social workers, and multi-agency domestic violence and sexual abuse workshops and training, and in their May 2019 inspection findings, Ofsted noted that:

"Well-established and flexible services provide effective and sustained interventions for children and adults at risk from domestic abuse."

## Focus for the year ahead

- Evaluation of our contract with RISE, procured with Community Safety in 2016, evidences that this service is performing well. We intend to re-commission RISE in the next year for Family Services to continue to develop this work
- Work with the Early Help service to ensure good engagement with Early Help during the assessment process to strengthen step down at assessment closure
- Ensure expertise of domestic abuse, hidden harm and adult mental health links is used to inform assessments
- Strengthen the use of research findings in assessment analysis

## Intervention and Planning

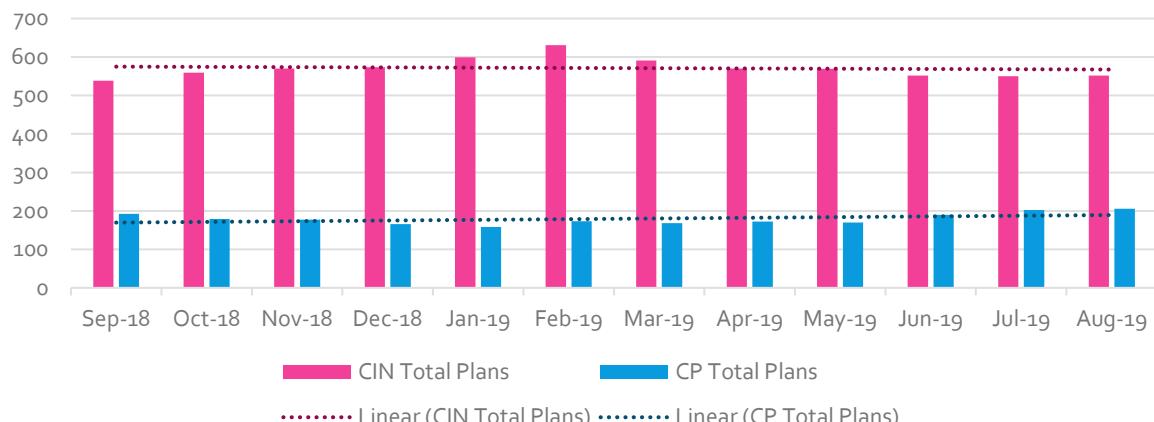
### Summary

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 focus on planning over the period has begun to achieve positive change for children in many areas of the service, with inspectors noting in May 2019 that:

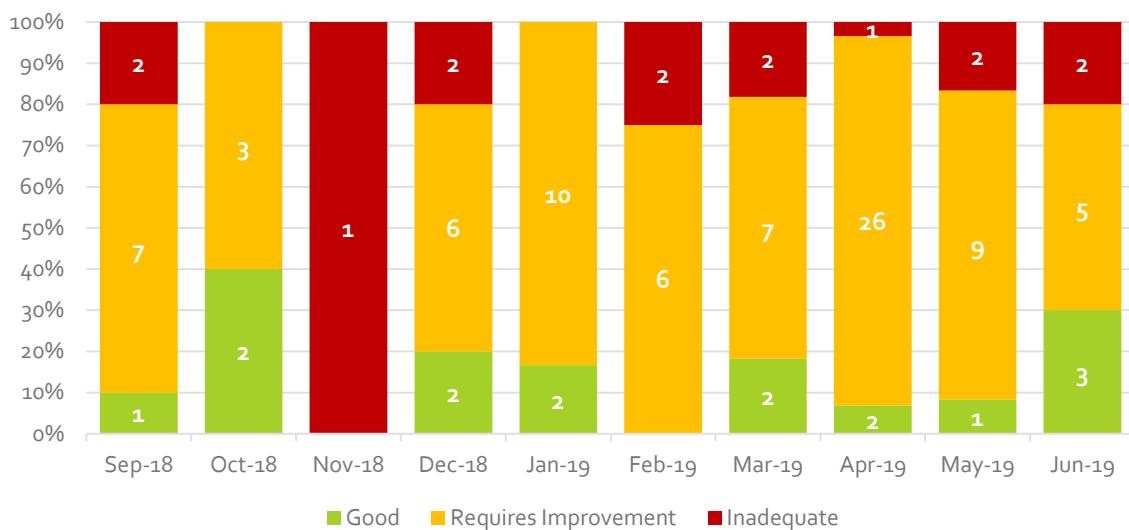
Most child protection and child in need plans are realistic and identify clear desired outcomes, making it easy for parents and children to understand any concerns. Plans are increasingly child focused, although this is not yet consistent across the whole service.

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 to drive up the quality and timeliness of planning and outcome focused intervention activities. With increased management oversight, thresholds for child protection are becoming better understood and this has led to a consistency in the numbers of children on CIN and CP Plans across the year.

Number of Children on CP and CIN Plans



## I&P Audit Gradings

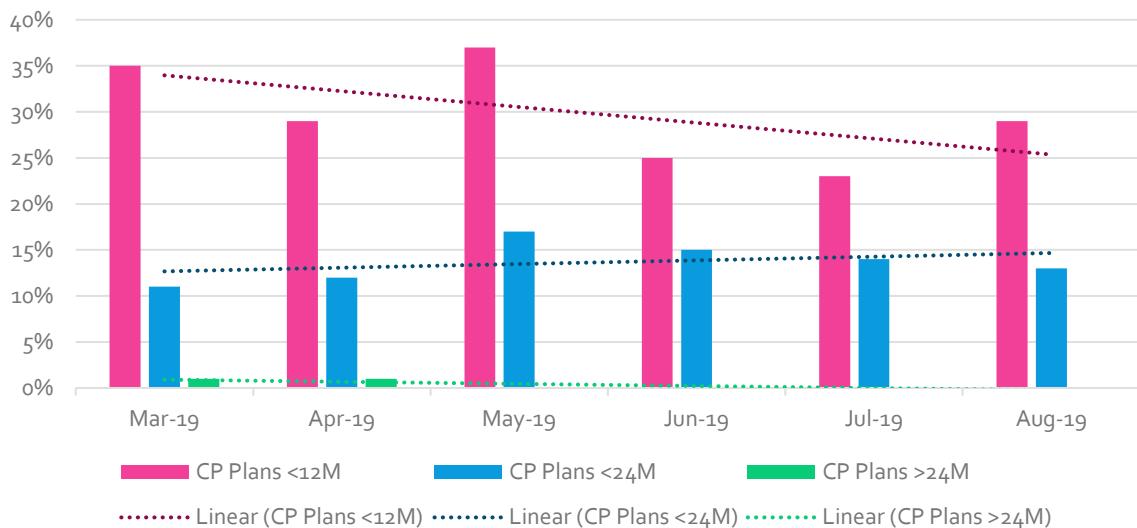


The group supervision principals applied in DAT are currently being developed in Intervention & Planning with the newly appointed Clinical Practitioners supporting the I&P Service, and this additional oversight will support continued improvement in planning.

### Strengths and achievements

The Assessment and Change Forum is now embedded, and has the aims of driving timely and purposeful assessments for unborn children and children in pre-proceedings Public Law Outline, and providing a reflective space for practitioners to consider the impact of their interventions and change goals with children and families. Data for the past 6 months shows that there has been a reduction in children on CP Plans for over 12 months and 24 months, indicating that the approach of the Assessment & Change Forum in supporting reflective reviews of progress for children subject to a CP plan for 6 months or longer is having an impact in supporting practitioners with planning, intervention and decision making

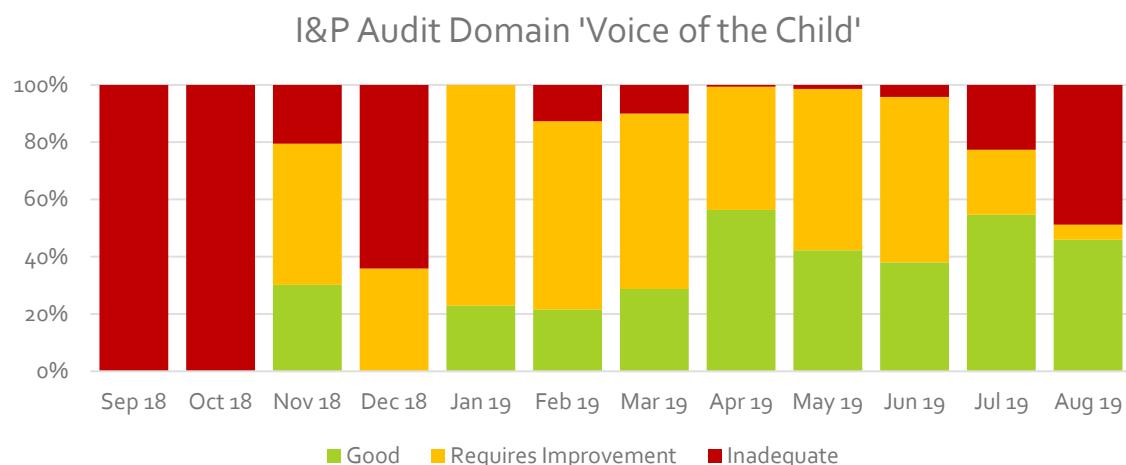
## Duration of CP Plans



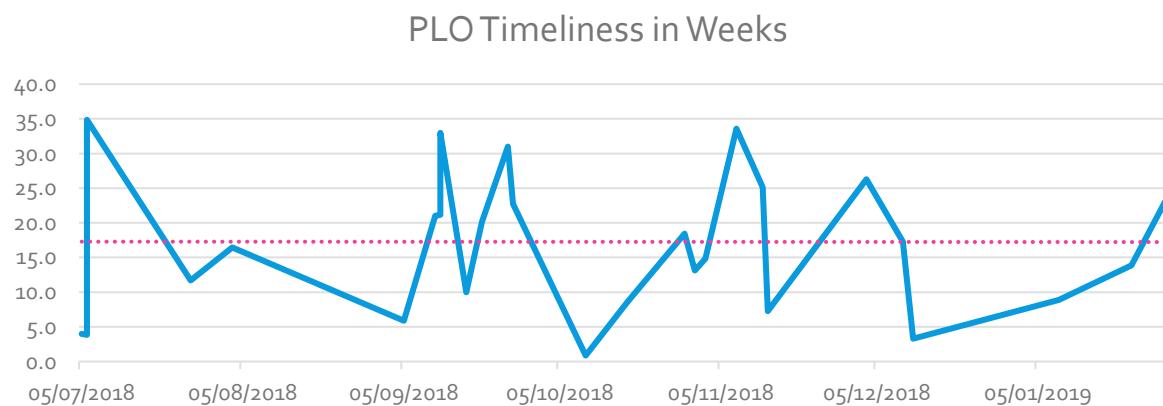
Audit data evidences that the quality of social work practice for children on a child protection plan is strengthening, with consistent and appropriate thresholds being applied. Audit findings show an increase in children and young people attending their Child Protection Conferences and Core Group Meetings which is leading, together with increased parental engagement, to Plans that are co-produced and more effective interventions. In May 2019, Ofsted inspectors noted that:

"Social workers know their children well. They visit children very regularly and see them alone. Increasing use is made of purposeful, individual work to help to understand children's experiences and to inform planning. In a minority of cases, records are not completed in a timely manner, which results in gaps in information on children's records."

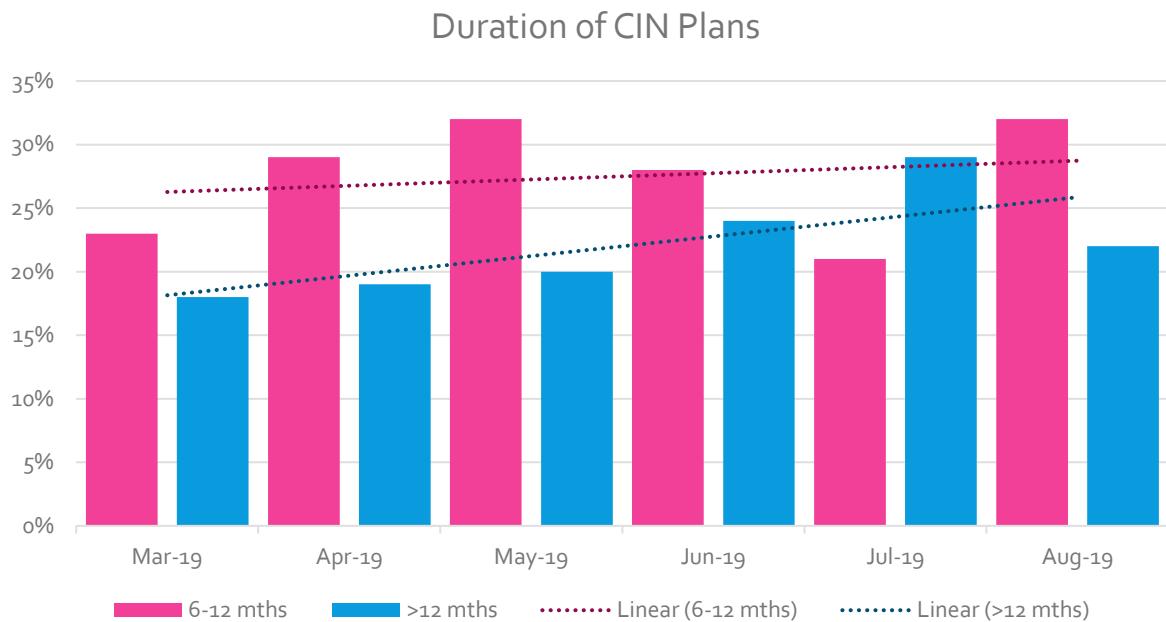
Our audit activity supports this observation, and the voice of the child is more evident in files than at this time last year, and there has been a marked increase and maintenance in the proportion of good work, however the recording in the plan needs to be more consistent so that the direct work that we know is happening is recorded.



Our PLO data is showing an average of 17 weeks to completion going back 6 months from the most recent (January 2019) start date.



Areas of learning from audits point to the need for practitioners to confidently close or step down CIN cases by promoting access to universal, universal plus or targeted support services when safeguarding concerns within the Plan have been satisfactorily addressed. This is reflected in the data for open CIN plans, which shows an increase in the proportion open for over 6 months.



#### Focus for the year ahead

- Working alongside Early Help in stepping down children and families from CIN plans
- Embed pathways for the Integrated Clinical Service across Children's Social Care is a key area of focus for the year ahead. Permanent Clinical Practitioners have been appointed enabling increased access to mental health consultation, joined up assessment and intervention activities.
- Stabilise I&P workforce with good quality practitioners that understand a range of effective and evidence based intervention approaches
- Continue to build on the success of edge of care interventions in I&P to maintain the decline in adolescents becoming Looked After
- The Practice Development Workers will continue supporting social workers to consider attachments, relationships, diversity and develop increasingly sophisticated direct work approaches.
- The CAMHS transformation programme is leading a holistic review of CAMHS service provision and other early intervention services to inform future commissioning intentions for 20/21.

## Children in Care

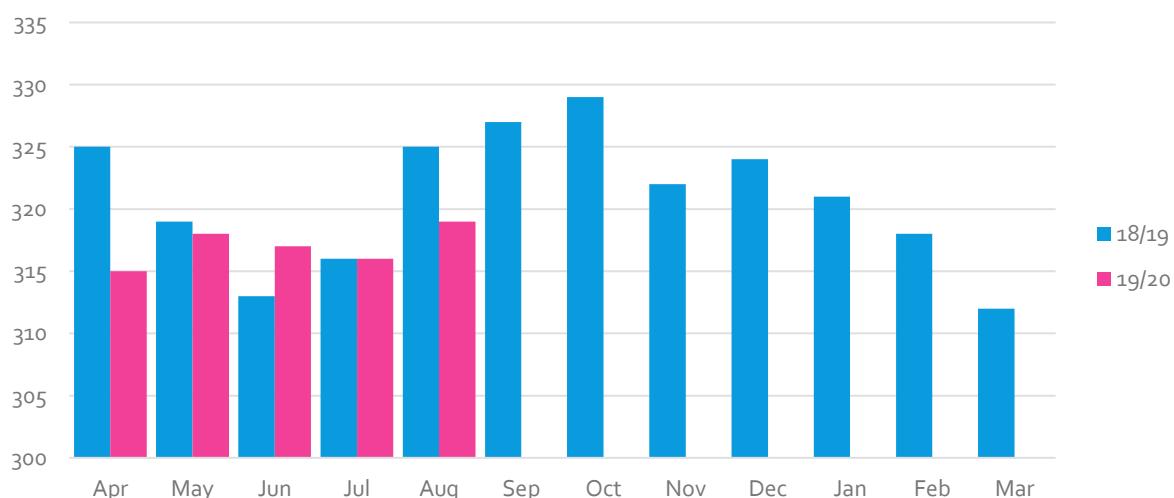
### Summary

A continued focus on practice and direct work with children and young people in Children in Care has driven improvements in the quality of practice. In their May 2019 inspection, Ofsted inspectors found that:

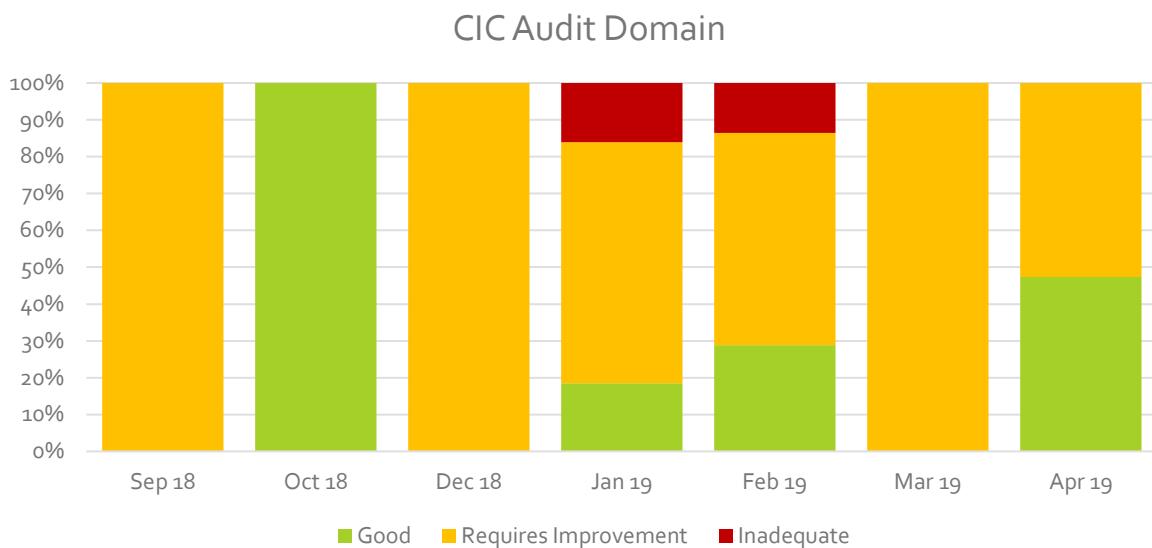
"The quality of services for children in care has improved since the inspection in 2017. Social workers and managers are aspirational for the children in their care and demonstrate a determination to improve children's experiences and outcomes."

There are currently 319 children in care in Barnet, which is fewer than this time last year but in line with the figures since the start of 2019. Most of our young people are boys (58.6%) and are over 11, with most aged over 16. 65, or 19.4%, of our children in care are unaccompanied asylum seeking children, which is around average as a proportion of our cohort of children in care.

Number of Children in Care



Audit data from the domain 'CiC' shows that standards of work for children in care increasingly have good elements to the practice and improvements are being maintained. Practitioners have received more frequent high quality reflective supervision and robust practice development support through group supervision and the workforce development offer which is having the positive impact on the overall quality of practice.



### Strengths and achievements

We are ensuring children can be placed in their permanent homes at the earliest opportunity through the embedded permanency planning panel and permanence tracker meeting. This is consolidating better practice, and enabling managers to have tighter oversight and grip on children's plans for permanence and ensure that decision-making is timely and effective. In their May 2019 inspection report, inspectors noted that:

*"In most cases, children's needs for permanence are considered at the earliest opportunity. Whenever possible, children are looked after within their extended families. Assessments of connected persons are timely and comprehensive, identifying how the longer-term needs of children will be met. Support packages are creative and effective."*

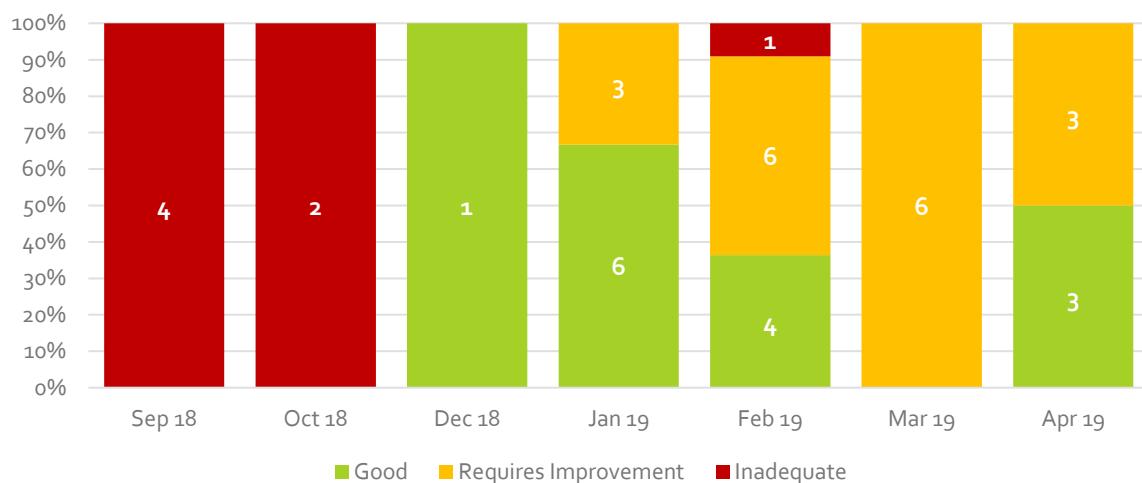
Child centred practice is now ensuring that children in care and care leavers have a stronger voice, interventions are centred on their needs and they are part of the decision making and care planning for their futures. Feedback from young people at the April 2019 BOP event was positive about our workers, who young people said offer the right kind of support, and that we can improve this by giving Children in Care opportunities to engage with elected members and Family Service managers. Ofsted inspectors found that:

*"Social workers know their children well and genuinely care about them. Children are seen regularly, routinely alone and the direct work undertaken with them is clearly taken into account in plans."*

Over the year there has been increased consultation activity taking place between social work teams and IRO's in the care planning process. Audits more consistently find that the voice of the child is stronger and evident in their care plans and our performance data is more strongly reflecting that every effort is being made to enable children and young people

to participate in their reviews and contribute to their care plans and pathway plans directly or indirectly.

#### CiC Audit Domain 'Voice of the Child'



The introduction of the All About Me document has provided social workers with an opportunity to ensure they know their children and engage in a dialogue to establish their views and ensure their voices are captured within care and pathway planning. This is reflected on the file and in recent audit activity. Between May and July there have been two further audits completed in Children in Care which both show this domain as good.

#### Focus for the year ahead

- Drive consistency for all children in care and care leavers and ensure that their records effectively show their journey and planning.
- Embed the new 'All about me' tool to assess and plan for the needs of children in care and care leavers and ensure consistently good quality plans is a priority for the service
- Improve the recording of management oversight and supervision to be more consistent, and reflective within the Corporate Parenting teams
- Life-story work for some children is in place, but needs to be embedded for all children in care. Life story work for children in settled placements will be further embedded using the Life Story toolkit developed as part of the practice improvements.

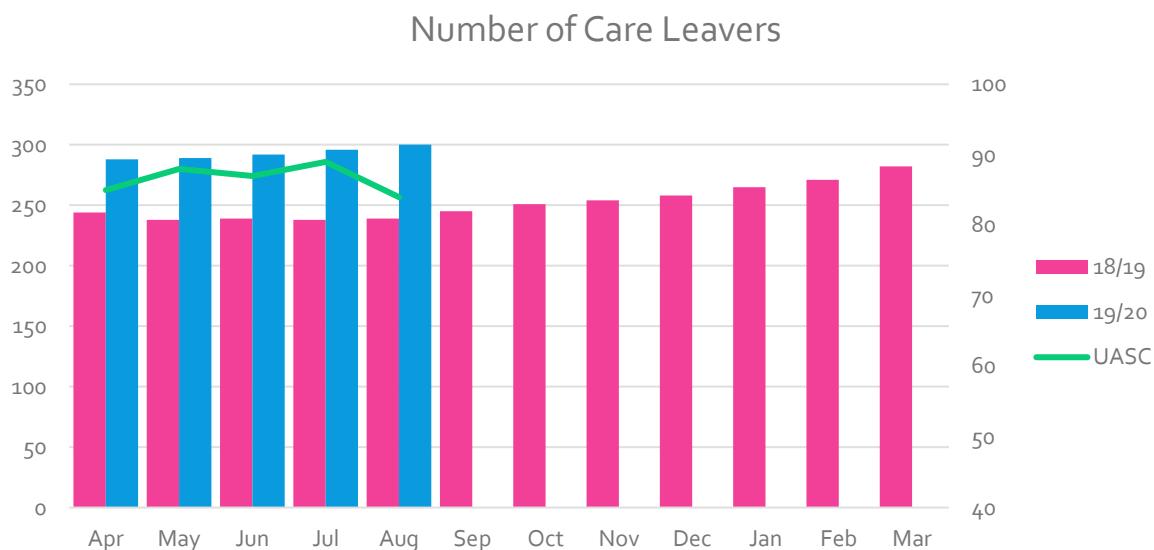
## Onwards and Upwards

### Summary

As at 31 August 2019 there were 300 Care Leavers aged 18 to 25 being supported by Barnet's Leaving Care Service, (Onwards and Upwards). 43 of our care leavers are over 21. We have worked to transform our care leaver offer during our improvement journey, and Ofsted inspectors recognised this in their May 2019 inspection, stating:

"Care leavers are in suitable accommodation, and there is good use of staying put arrangements, including for young adults in their twenties. The majority of care leavers are in education, employment or training and there is a good focus on engaging young people in such activities by their personal advisers... Personal advisers are proactive and genuinely interested in the young people, who value the support that they receive."

The majority of Barnet's care leavers are from Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds (58%). This aligns with, but is slightly higher than the number of young people from BME groups across the borough, where BME young people account for 52% of the borough's children and young people population. The number of care leavers from BAME backgrounds has increased over the past three years. Data suggests that this increase is linked to the rise in unaccompanied asylum-seeking children coming into Barnet's care over this period.



Due to the changing demographic of our Care Leavers, work has gone into developing services that can support high risk young people aged 18 and over who are no longer in care. The High-Risk Case Forum has been established, chaired by the Assistant Head of Service, which includes the Police, Practice Development Workers, CSG Co-ordinator, Mental Health clinician, substance use workers and the Onwards and Upwards service to work systemically to reduce the risks faced by Care Leavers. Ofsted attended this forum during their 2019 inspection and noted:

"The multi-agency high-risk case forum for care leavers is well supported by partner agencies and explores creative ways to engage vulnerable young people with multi-agency services. Clear actions are agreed for each young person, with a timescale for review; this helps to ensure that the risks are understood and appropriate plans to support young people are put in place."

The Forum is firmly embedded now, and work is currently ongoing with young people to reduce risks from a multiagency perspective. Personal Advisors report feeling more supported in working with the young people known to the forum, and stronger partnership working can be seen around the young people that have been identified and discussed.

On 31 March 2019 62% of the 164 Care Leavers aged 19 to 21 were in education, employment or training compared to 53% for our Statistical Neighbours and Outer London. This was an area identified as needing improvement and it has generated interest across the council resulting in a working group led by the Chief Executive. Current initiatives include a dedicated DWP work coach at the Onwards and Upwards offices supporting young people transitioning to independence and accessing employment and benefits. Additional initiatives include BOOST a council led programme supporting young people into education and employment. It is a high priority of CPOG and the council to increase this figure further.

### **Strengths and achievements**

Cambridge Education have been commissioned to lead a participation project to improve outcomes for our care leavers. A participation programme provider Bridging the gap identified 6 main barriers to care leavers entering the re-engagement programme in October 2018:

- Mental health problems
- Timekeeping
- Low confidence/low self esteem
- Difficulty completing things they start
- Substance misuse
- Learning difficulties

A multi-agency, multi-dimensional approach to reducing the number of NEET care leavers is now in place to ensure a broader range of needs can be met, and demonstrates the Council's Commitment to supporting Care Leavers. The project involves collaborative working amongst a range of partners, including:

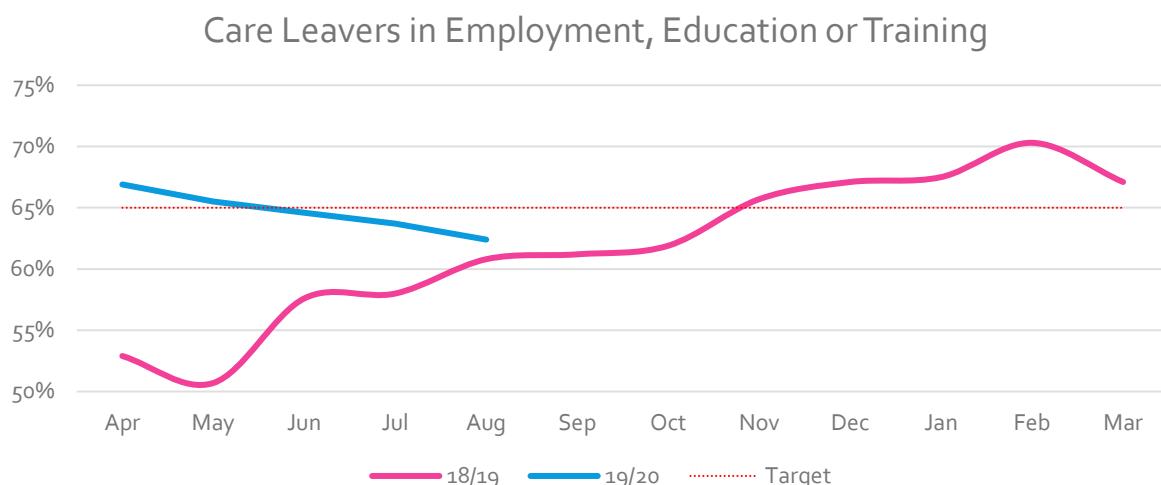
- Onwards and Upwards team
- Virtual School
- Barnet Education, Employment, and Training Service
- Job Centre Plus
- The Growth and Development Team working in the Commissioning Group
- The Business, Employment and Skills team in Entrepreneurial Barnet partners including local colleges and University
- Bridging the Gap (BtG)- a bespoke training programme targeted at working with young people who have experienced significant trauma. The support provided by the facilitators aims to develop young people's awareness of their 'triggers' and to support participants to develop new strategies to cope with their issues.
- Skills Training – personalised internship programme with work experience and the opportunity to gain functional skills qualifications.
- My Bnk – specialist training in money management for young people

- Barnet Homes through the BOOST projects delivering holistic drop in support and through its housing options service
- Drive Forward commissioned by DWP to support employment pathways for care leavers

A budget of £200kpa was created by the Chief Executive Office, and is held centrally, to fund the creation of apprenticeship roles suitable for care leavers.

- Within the Street Scene Service, there is a significant function servicing and maintaining refuse and other vehicles. Two roles as apprentice mechanics have been created and filled as well as three administrative posts.
- One young person interested in social care is working in an apprenticeship in the passenger transport service, as a personal assistant to young people with disabilities.
- An apprenticeship in the communications service was created for a young woman interested in media, although she subsequently did not take up the post.

The Participation project will focus on developing an offer to support care leavers wishing to pursue self-employment and enterprise in 2019, as much of the current participation offer has focussed on education and training options to date.



On 31 April 2019, 94.6% of Care Leavers age 19 to 21 were in suitable accommodation compared to 83% of Statistical Neighbours and 82% of Outer London. This statistic has remained consistent over the last year and much is done through the council and partners to maintain a high rate of suitable accommodation. Strengthened partnership working between Family Services and Barnet Homes has contributed to positive changes being made in the housing offer for care leavers, an example being implementation of earlier nomination of care leavers for the long-term housing tenancy, from 17 years to 16.5 years.

The 'Staying Put' Scheme allows care leavers to stay with their foster carers after they turn 18, if the young person and foster carer agree to this arrangement. As at 31 March 2019, Barnet had 15% (n=46) of care leavers living with former foster carers after they turned 18, under Staying Put arrangement. This compares to 8% (n=27) in 2018. Staying Put placements supports young people to continue to engage in education and a more gradual transition to living independently. Conditions conducive to the Staying Put arrangement

include a positive placement that meets the young person's needs, and the will of both the young person and foster carer to continue with the arrangement.

During 2018 the quality and effectiveness of Barnet's advocacy arrangements were reviewed. Following consultation with key stakeholders, an arrangement which is a broader and more holistic support offer was introduced; Action for Children are now providing Advocacy Services to Children in Care, children on Child Protection plans and Care Leavers for a period of 12 months.

### Focus for the year ahead

- The quality of Pathway Plans
- Changes to the way social workers and PA's work are being introduced to ensure that we respond to the concerns young people have raised about lack of support and poor timing of transition to independence
- We will undertake a full review of existing advocacy and related services, and explore effective ways to meet the needs of children in care and care leavers. This action responds to the Ofsted inspection identifying that promoting advocacy services for children in care is an area for improvement.

## Fostering and Adoption

### Summary

The Adoption Service has an experienced and knowledgeable staff group who are child-centred in their approach and committed to enabling adoptive and Special Guardianship families to become stable, confident and resilient. Barnet has historically had very low rates of placement disruptions, this has been attributed to our ability to recruit and undertake high quality assessments and practitioners taking time to prepare children and adoptive families during the linking and matching process. There has been one adoption disruption in 2018/19, this was with non-Barnet approved adopters and a child placed by another borough. During their inspection in May 2019, inspectors noted:

"Adoption is routinely considered, including 'foster to adopt' for those children unable to live with their birth or extended families. Recruitment processes for adopters are thorough and the assessment, training and support for adopters are sound."

The Adoption and Post Permanence Team are responsible for the recruitment, training and assessment of prospective adopters, and following approval, identifying an appropriate match with a child(ren). The team also tracks all children in care, as well as those about to become looked after and unborn who may need permanence outside of their birth family. Active family finding is undertaken for all children who have a plan of, or a parallel plan of adoption.

The post permanence social workers are responsible for providing support to all adoptive families and Special Guardians who have children in their care whose needs cannot be met by universal services. The service makes good use of the Adoption Support Fund from

central government that funds therapeutic support for children with adoptive families and with special guardians.

The Carer Recruitment and Assessment Team (CRAT) are responsible for the advertising, recruiting and the assessment of prospective foster carers for Barnet Council. CRAT are involved with prospective carers from the point of initial enquiry, until they are formally presented to the Adoption and Fostering Panel for approval after which their approval as foster carers is ratified by the Agency Decision Maker. Carers are supported by the Fostering Support and Development team post their approval.

As of March 2019, Barnet had 110 approved fostering households, this represents a total figure of 178 carers registered with the agency. 70% of carer households live within the Barnet area and 30% of carer households based out of borough. In terms of diversity 63% of carers are female, 31% are of White British origin with second largest group being of Caribbean origin. The service had 14 approved carers of Jewish origin and three same sex carer households.

Foster carers are provided with a full calendar of training accessible through Barnet Learning and Development Team. Foster carers also have access to training provided within the North London Adoption and Fostering Consortium and Barnet Safeguarding Children Partnership. Training for foster carers is regularly reviewed and additional training courses have been identified to add to the training calendar, that include: Understanding child and adolescent mental health and self-harm, Prevent, Attuned therapeutic care, PACE and NVR Advanced. In their May 2019 inspection report, Ofsted reported that:

"Children receive good-quality care from their foster carers. Most in-house foster carers are recruited, assessed and approved within appropriate timescales. Assessments are thorough and demonstrate consideration of the impact of fostering on the whole family. Foster carers benefit from a wide range of support and training opportunities, and carers report being well supported."

### **Strengths and achievements**

Barnet adoption recruitment continues to be the most successful in the consortium. This means that we have a greater choice of matches for our children and that we can keep them close to home when that is appropriate. Particular emphasis is now placed on recruiting prospective adopters for early permanence. Discussions start during the regular information evenings and recruitment events and continue throughout the training period. During assessment, prospective adopters who may be willing and suitable to offer early permanence are identified and additional training can be offered via Coram BAAF.

Performance in adoption has improved in milestones 1, 2 and 5, and in the last year 13 children have exited care via adoption. In number of days:

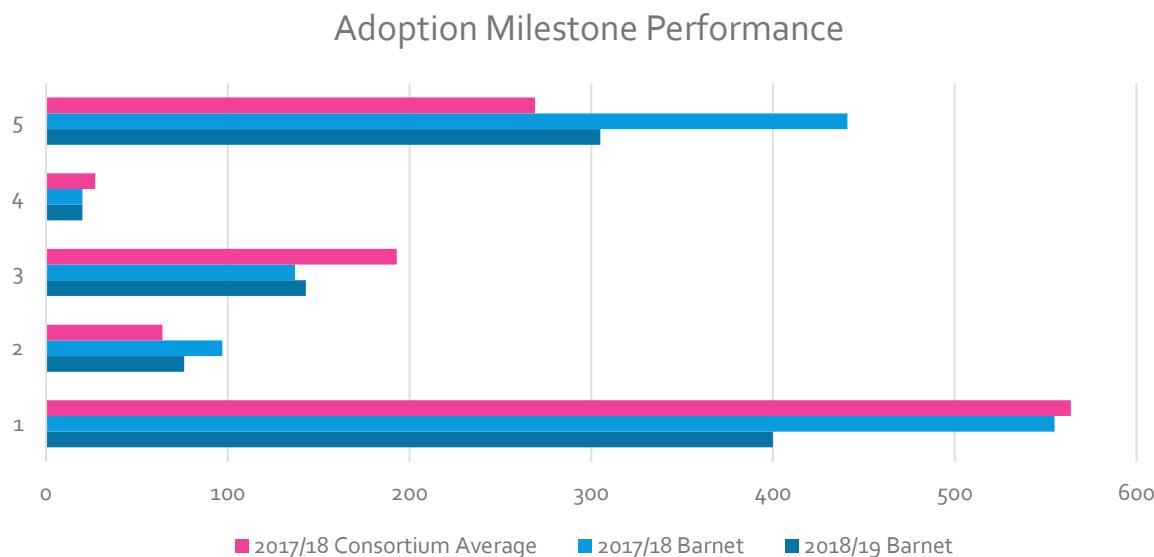
Milestone 1 = From becoming looked after to being placed

Milestone 2 = ADM decision to Placement Order

Milestone 3 = Placement Order to being match

Milestone 4 = Match to being placed

Milestone 5 = from being placed to the Adoption order



During the 2017/18 Barnet successfully applied for, and received Adoption Support Fund (ASF) funding totalling £154k, and for the 2018/19 period, Barnet successfully secured ASF funding totalling £289k. The ASF has been accessed to fund various therapeutic interventions including sensory integration, family therapy, art therapy, theraplay and therapeutic life story work. Specialist assessments to determine the most appropriate intervention have also been funded at locations such as the South London and Maudsley, Adoptionplus, The Anna Freud Centre and Hackney Child and Adolescent Mental Health Centre. As the fund is accessible up to the age of 21 (25 with an EHCP) we have had an increasing number of referrals for this cohort, particularly for those who were accessing therapy privately and have been made aware of the fund.

An application is currently in progress to fund the next Body and Soul sessions, weekly support groups (two groups according to age) for adopted children held on Saturdays for those struggling with peer relationships and self-esteem. The ASF also considers funding for training courses for adopters and special guardians. This has been used very successfully for training in areas such as The Great Behaviour Breakdown and Non-Violent Resistance.

#### Focus for the year ahead

In September 2019 adoption recruitment and assessment, family finding and post adoption support functions moved to Adopt North London, the Regional Adoption Agency made up of the six boroughs that currently constitute the North London Adoption Consortium. Thorough planning has been essential to ensure a seamless transition for both prospective adopters and children for whom we are actively family finding, as well as adoptive families for whom we are providing support.

A targeted marketing campaign is required for each specialism of fostering such as parent and child, respite for children with disabilities and supported lodging. This will need to be planned before the end of March 2020 for a timely result. A special training package for

each category will be developed so that this can be offered soon after Skills To Foster training, and before approval.

We want social workers to be involved in pre-stage 1 processes such as information sessions and screenings for thorough scrutiny from the early stages of assessment of foster carers, and for social workers to lead on initial visits. We aim to pair care leavers with social workers for these initial visits so that their views are heard at every stage of the recruitment process. We are working towards embedding a culture of regular reflective group supervisions so that we can collectively address issues and rule out applicants, if needed.

We need to improve our support to new foster carers. Our focus will be on;

- Experienced foster carers being paired with all new foster carers so that they can support and advise them on preparing for a placement.
- Ensuring that foster carers are carefully matched with children/young people and all relevant information shared prior to the match being confirmed so they can make informed decisions.
- Ensuring that for all children a Placement Planning Meeting takes place within 5 days of moving to the foster carer to ensure that the care plan is understood and implemented.
- New foster carers receiving more frequent visits (once every 2 weeks as a minimum for 12 weeks) once the child/young person is in their home.

## 0-25 Disabilities Service

### Summary

The 0–25 Disability Service offers a service to children or young people from 0–25 years of age who have a diagnosed severe/profound disability or diagnosed chronic health condition resulting in severe and profound disability. The eligibility criteria is broader for over 18's and also includes those with Care Act eligible needs who have a learning disability.

The September 2017 restructure of the 0-25 Disabilities Services is now fully embedded, with inspectors noting in their 2019 inspection that:

“Disabled children benefit from strong service provision. Workers in the disability service know their children and families well and demonstrate a good understanding of their complex needs.

Support and short breaks packages are comprehensive. Transition planning is timely. Plans for children are thorough, progress is monitored, and concerns are escalated appropriately when new or emerging risks are identified.”

The total number of children with a registered disability across all areas of Family Services over the past 12 months has reduced from 280 to 263 and has remained static for the past 3 months. The total number of these children within the 0-25 services is 187. As at March 2019 there were 13 children held in the service who are subject to a Child Protection Plan, and 13 Looked After Children.

There are 70 children receiving a CWD1 care package that is reviewed annually with the parents and who at time of crisis will receive support from family support worker. There are 91 CWD2 children with care package who are currently allocated to a social worker for additional family support and/or a review. 46 children are in receipt of statutory safeguarding interventions and are held on CWD3 plans. 1000 children are eligible for short breaks, of which 453 are currently accessing this support. This number fluctuates throughout the year, and increases during school holidays. The offer was revised in April 2019 taking into account feedback from parents, some of whom are still being supported to navigate the new offer.

The total number of 18-25 year olds held by the team is 236. 147 are allocated for assessment and support, 23 are allocated to family support workers for support, and 66 are in receipt of care packages that are reviewed annually.

### **Strengths and Achievements**

The views of children and parents are an important part of the CWD assessment and the child and family assessment process. Care is being taken to try and capture the views of non-verbal children and young people. Links with the Parent and Carers Forum are well established and feedback from parents indicate that they feel better informed about the 0-25 service.

The Local Offer was improved over the last year and 0-25 service continues exploring ways in which they can use the website to engage with families.

The short breaks recommissioning process which included an extensive consultation process is progressing – the offer will be more flexible and responsive to individual need. An extensive consultation with families, partners and providers took place and the feedback on the new framework was mostly positive.

The new CWD pathway is now established and existing plans have been migrated on to the new pathway. It provides a simplified format which outlines the complete package of support from all the agencies. It is linked into the 0-25 Disability Resource Panel process and reduces delay and unnecessary paperwork. The CWD pathway has helped the social workers to be clearer about what is the difference between ‘support needed’ and ‘safeguarding concerns’. The CWD pathway is linked to supervision and review frequency. This assists in case allocation and keeping caseloads manageable.

Transition planning is improving. A social worker case holding the 18-25 year old’s will work in tandem with the child social worker from the age 16. The ‘adult’ social worker completes the Care Act Assessment promptly and any Continuing Health Care checklist needed.

There is also improving partnership working with the over 25 adult teams. Transitions start at 23.5 for adults moving to Adult Social Care. An advanced practitioner attends the Adults Panel and ensures all young people approaching 25 are tracked through this panel.

Family Support Workers are now working with young people and their families to emotionally prepare them for supported living and changes in education. This work has been particularly effective at reducing anxiety, enabling young people and families to think more about the future and their plan. One consequence has been that young people are remaining with their families for longer.

The role of the 0-25 Strategic manager has been further developed. Development sessions are held for staff across the whole service who work with children with a disability or who need support in navigating SEND processes. Regular contributions are made to the quarterly SEND newsletter and we are able to take a strategic lead in relation to SEND development workstreams. The contribution made by 0-25 to the EHCP processes ensures that there is a more consistent social care contribution to the assessment process.

### Focus for the year ahead

- Complete a cost analysis for one case recording system that will better enable accurate performance data, budget monitoring and better quality recordings that captures the transition work more fully.
- Explore ways emergency placements can be identified for children with complex needs.
- Develop overnight respite provision
- A co-production project is being planned to produce an interactive guide about transitions which can be put on the Local Offer website.
- The development of the Autism Strategy is a priority this year to ensure we understand and respond to the growing need within our community.
- We are developing a system of provision mapping which ensures care package planning is co-ordinated and addresses all areas of need. This system will assist parents to better understand the provision of services that has been agreed for their child based on the assessment of need.
- The processes and procedures for Continuing Health Care are confused and lack transparency. A task group consisting of managers from Health, Education and Social Care is developing an agreed operating protocol in relation to joint funding agreements, Continuing care and Continuing Health care assessments and joint decision making for the children and young people.