

	<p style="text-align: center;">CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND SAFEGUARDING COMMITTEE</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Thursday 18th November 2021</p>
Title	Family Services Quarterly Update
Report of	Chairman of the Committee, Councillor David Longstaff
Wards	All
Status	Public with Exempt Appendix 2 (Not for publication by virtue of paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended as this relates to information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person or body (including the authority holding that information)).
Urgent	No
Key	No
Enclosures	Appendix 1 - Children Service's Analysis Tool (ChAT) Appendix 2 (EXEMPT) - LILA Annual Visualised Dashboard Appendix 3 - Your Life, Your Care Survey Appendix 4 - Your Life Beyond Care Survey Appendix 5 - Competition & Markets Authority Report
Officer Contact Details	Chris Munday, Executive Director for Children's Services
Summary	
This report gives an update on Family Services progress and asks Members to note and scrutinise performance data, that can be found in Appendix 1.	

Recommendations
1. That the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee is asked to note and provide comments on the CHAT performance report summarised in the report, and provided in Appendix 1.
2. That the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee is asked to note and provide comments on the LIA performance information summarised in the report, and provided in Appendix 2.
3. That the Children, Educations and Safeguarding Committee is asked to note the outcome of the Bright Spots Survey and provide comments on the findings published in the report provided in Appendix 3 and 4.
4. That the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee is asked to note the interim report of the Competition and Market's authority provided in Appendix 5

1. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

CHaT Performance Report

- 1.1 Data at the start of October shows that contacts are very similar to last report, going up from 10661 to 10692. Open Early Help Assessments have reduced from 1738 to 1677, showing a return to more normal levels following an increase during the pandemic.
- 1.2 Referral numbers remain at a similar level, from 1561 to 1537, along with the number of completed assessments, from 1108 to 1092, and the number of open assessments, from 380 to 389. There is a reduction in open CIN from 1432 to 1406, and a reduction in new Child Protection Plans 115 to 108 following slight increase in the last period. This is usual for a period that includes the school summer holidays. Overall, however, there remains a similar number of children on CP plans, 193 to 194.
- 1.3 There is a similar Children Looked After in the reporting period, up from 332 to 331, and children started to be looked after is down from 105 to 101. Health assessments down from 95% to 87%, and we are speaking to Health colleagues to ensure these are being recorded correctly.

CIN Census

- 1.4 The Children in Need (CIN) census collects information at child level on:
- any child referred to children's social care services within the year; and
 - any cases open at the beginning of the year for whom local authorities were providing a service.
- 1.5 This census is a statutory annual collection of data from each local authority in England. The data collected is used to calculate the number of referrals and assessments carried out by children's social care services, along with the number of children assessed to be in need and the number that were the subject of a child

protection plan. This information is published by the department at local, regional and national level, and the data for 2020-2021 is now available.

- 1.6 LIIA is London's Regional Innovation and Improvement Alliance and works with the ADCS, London Councils, Department for Education, the Local Government Association (LGA), the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) and the eight other Regional Innovation and Improvement Alliances across the country to promote learning through collaboration which benefits children. Using data from the Alliance, we have been able to compare our CIN Census data to those of other Boroughs across London.
- 1.7 At the front door, our rate of referrals has been lower this year than in 2019-20, with a reduction of 11.7% from 300 to 265 per 10,000 of the 0-17 population. During the year, only 8 out of the London Boroughs reported a rise in the referral rates, and nine authorities reported a greater reduction in the rate of referrals than Barnet. As we have previously reported to CES Committee over the course of the last year, the largest reduction in referrals was from schools, and data shows a clear pattern in an increase in education referrals when school closures ceased in March this year. This is reflected in the reduction in the overall number of children open to statutory services by 12.6%, and we have seen a rise in the number of children open to our Early Help services during this time, showing that the system has supported those families experiencing lower level difficulties during lockdowns.
- 1.8 The reduction in referrals to statutory services has led to a reduction in the rate of section 47 child protection enquiries, which have reduced by 19.5%, amongst the highest reduction across London but at a rate consistent with historical patterns for Barnet and in line with the reduction in referrals. The rate of initial child protection conferences is also down, by 9.1%, illustrating a corresponding fall alongside referrals and section 47s.
- 1.9 Child protection plans have remained at a steady rate compared to previous years. There has been a 7.8% decrease in the rate of new child protection plans, corresponding with the reduction in child protection activity at the front door. There has been a slightly higher rate of child protection plans ending, at 12%, which balances out a final overall rate of current child protection plans as almost the same at the previous year. 10 Boroughs had greater decreases in rates of child protection plans, while 14 local authorities had increased rates overall in the year 2019-20.
- 1.10 Data on children looked after by the local authority shows fewer changes in rates than front door data. We had an increase of 17% in the rate of new looked after children (UASCs), which is due in part to an upward trend in unaccompanied asylum-seeking children over the last couple of years. In 2019-20, however, the rate of UASCs as decreased by 4.8% compared to increased rates in 10 Boroughs, as many of the UASCs in care have now moved into leaving care services.

Bright Spots Survey

- 1.11 During the summer we commissioned a survey by Bright Spots in partnership with Coram Voice and the Rees Centre. This survey closed in May 2021 with participation of 176 (54%) of children and young people and initial findings indicate that most

children know and trust their social worker, feel involved in decisions made about their lives and feel safe where they live. The full report is published in appendix 2 and is overwhelmingly positive about young people's experiences in Barnet. Findings have been considered across the system, and plans are being put into place to inform service and delivery and enhance services for the year ahead.

- 1.12 The majority (63%) of children and young people surveyed were living in foster care. One quote from a young person in foster care - "When we go to places they say I am a foster child to get a discount" - reflected some of the stigma that young people in care can experience. We will be sharing these findings with our Foster Carers Coffee Morning groups, and with the Fostering Support Team to ensure this is discussed/challenged in supervisions with foster carers.
- 1.13 Having a coherent account of one's history and understanding the reasons that led to becoming looked after are important in the development of an integrated identity and in recovery from abuse and neglect. In Barnet, children in the 8-11yrs age group most often reported not knowing why they were in care, or wanting to know more (45%). The same was true for 21% of the young people aged 11-18yrs. Team Managers and IRO's will explore if every child has a life story book or later life letter with practitioners, and if children are identified not will have this work for it to be prioritised and tracked to completion in CIC reviews and supervisions. A module on identity, emotional well-being and understanding life stories will be added to the Independent Living Project for care leavers. Life story work leads will create and deliver training workshops including best practice examples of life story work or later life letters to be shared across services.
- 1.14 We will ensure feedback to children and participation work, including using BOP forums and children participating in events to feedback what the findings have been and how young people would like to see change. IRO's will explore with children in reviews or mid-way meetings if they feel their life story is clearly communicated to them and if their views are included.

Children's Social Care Market Study

- 1.15 In March 2021 the Competition and Market's Authority launched a market study into the supply of Children's Social Care placements in England, Scotland and Wales. This was in response to concerns about a shortage of appropriate places for looked-after children and high prices paid by local authorities. The interim report is available in appendix 4.
- 1.16 The Association of Directors of Children's Services has responded to the interim report, highlighting that "Meaningful change is needed and ADCS calls on government to implement legislation which prevents for-profit operations or as a minimum caps the level of fees chargeable in fostering and residential services, similar to that in Scotland. Local authorities would be able to reinvest some of this money and develop more in-house provision and earlier intensive support, closer to the communities in which children grow up. The system must be driven by children's needs, not maximising profits."

2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED

2.1 N/A

3. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

3.1 Not applicable.

4. IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION

4.1. Corporate Priorities and Performance

4.1.1 Family Friendly is a key part of the Barnet Plan for 2021-2025 with the vision of “Creating a Family Friendly Barnet, enabling opportunities for our children and young people to achieve their best”.

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

4.2.1 There are no resource implications.

4.3. Social Value

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

4.4. Legal and Constitutional References

4.4.1. Local authorities have specific duties in respect of children under various legislation including the Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004. They have a general duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need in their area and, if this is consistent with the child’s safety and welfare, to promote the upbringing of such children by their families by providing services appropriate to the child’s needs. They also have a duty to promote the upbringing of such children by their families, by providing services appropriate to the child’s needs, provided this is consistent with the child’s safety and

welfare. They should do this in partnership with parents, in a way that is sensitive to the child's race, religion, culture and language and that, where practicable, takes account of the child's wishes and feelings. Under the Children and Families Act 2014, local authorities must consider how the child or young person can be supported to facilitate their development and to help them achieve the "best possible educational and other outcomes".

4.4.2. Local authorities have specific duties to care leavers under the Children Act 1989 as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017. The corporate parenting duties and powers under the 1989 Act include:

- to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people;
- to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings;
- to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people;
- to help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners;
- to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people;
- for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and,
- to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

4.4.3. The Council's Constitution, Article 7 notes that the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee has 'Responsibility for all matters relating to children, schools and education.'

5. Risk Management

5.1. Specific risk management is being carried out for Children and Young People's Plan. Any Family Services risks are recorded on the Family Services Risk Register and

monitored each quarter by the Senior Leadership Team with escalations to CMT if necessary.

6. Equalities and Diversity

6.1. The 2010 Equality Act outlines the provisions of the Public-Sector Equalities Duty which requires Public Bodies to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
- advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups
- foster good relations between people from different groups

6.2. The broad purpose of this duty is to integrate considerations of equality into day business and keep them under review in decision making, the design of policies and the delivery of services

6.3. 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. We continue to closely monitor this, as report appendixes notes, in our performance data.

7. Corporate Parenting Principles

7.1. In July 2016, the Government published their Care Leavers' strategy Keep on Caring which outlined that the "... [the government] will introduce a set of corporate parenting principles that will require all departments within a local authority to recognise their role as corporate parents, encouraging them to look at the services and support that they provide through the lens of what a reasonable parent would do to support their own children.'

7.2. The corporate parenting principles set out seven principles that local authorities must have regard to when exercising their functions in relation to looked after children and young people, as follows:

- to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people;

- to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings;
- to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people;
- to help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners;
- to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people;
- for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and;
- to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

8. Consultation and Engagement

N/A

9. Insight

N/A

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 [Browse meetings - Children, Education & Safeguarding Committee \(moderngov.co.uk\)](https://moderngov.co.uk/committees/children-education-safeguarding-committee/meetings)
