

	<h2>Health and Wellbeing Board</h2> <h3>9 December 2021</h3>
Title	OFSTED Report on Children in Care
Report of	Executive Director of Children and Family Services
Wards	All
Status	Public
Urgent	No
Key	No
Enclosures	Appendix 1 – Focused visit to the London Borough of Barnet local authority children’s services
Officer Contact Details	Brigitte Jordaan, Director of Children Social care 0208 359 3012 Brigitte.jordaan@barnet.gov.uk
<h3>Summary</h3>	
<p>Local authorities judged to be good or outstanding at their most recent inspection will usually receive a short inspection about every three years after the previous inspection. In between inspections, the local authority will receive one focused visit or a Joint Targeted Area inspection of Children Services (JTAI).</p> <p>Ofsted inspectors conducted a focused visit to Barnet children’s services on 23 and 24 June. The visit was carried out in line with the Inspection of Local Authority Children’s Services (ILACS) framework and looked at the local authority’s arrangements for children in care.</p> <p>Their findings were published on 2 August 2021 and are included in this report.</p>	

<h3>Recommendations</h3>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the Health and Wellbeing Board note the letter and recommendations made by Ofsted.

1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED

- 1.1 Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills is leading Ofsted's work into how England's social care system has delivered child-centred practice and care within the context of the restrictions placed on society during the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic. The findings of a focused visit to Barnet local authority children's services on 23 and 24 June 2021 are summarized in the Ofsted letter attached.
- 1.2 Inspectors found that, despite the challenges of the Covid pandemic, services for children in care have continued to improve since the last inspection in May 2019. They stated that "Senior leaders and partner agencies in Barnet have worked together to deliver a well-coordinated and effective response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This has included surge testing and support to asylum-seekers placed without notice by the Home Office in dispersal centres within the borough."
- 1.3 According to the findings most children in care benefit from living in placements that meet their individual needs. Ofsted spoke to partners including Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS), and the judiciary, who reported positive partnership working and this has contributed to our "well coordinated and effective response to the Covid-19 pandemic" and they stated that "Leaders understand what further improvements can be made and have plans in place to deliver this."
- 1.4 They found that disabled children in care benefit from the social work interventions in the 0-25 team – "Workers know their children and families well and demonstrate a strong awareness of their complex needs and increased risks due to additional vulnerabilities."
- 1.5 In relation to the health response to children in care they found that "throughout the pandemic, there has been close collaboration with the looked after children's health service to help to improve the health outcomes of children in care." They saw evidence that health assessments of children in care have continued to be prioritised and children benefit from the integrated clinical service that is fully embedded into family services.
- 1.6 Inspectors highlighted two areas of social work practice that need to improve:
- Case recording, including the recording of supervision, visits and direct work with children, and the rationale for decision-making on placements
 - The completion and quality of 'All about me' plans.
- 1.7 We accept these recommendations and will be detailing our plans to make improvements to these areas of practice in our annual self-assessment, which we will meet with Ofsted about in November and will be presented to the Children, Education and Safeguarding committee (CES) thereafter.

2. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

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

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED

3.1 Not applicable

4. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

4.1 Not applicable

5. IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION

5.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance

5.1.1 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".

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

Not applicable

5.3 Social Value

5.3.1 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.

5.4 Legal and Constitutional References

5.4.1 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".

5.4.2 Under Article 7 of the Council's Constitution, the terms of reference of the Health and Wellbeing Board includes the following responsibilities

- To jointly assess the health and social care needs of the population with NHS commissioners, and apply the findings of a Barnet joint strategic needs assessment (JSNA) to all relevant strategies and policies.
- To promote partnership and, as appropriate, integration, across all necessary areas, including the use of joined-up commissioning plans across the NHS, social care and public health. To explore partnership work across North Central London where appropriate
- To work together to ensure the best fit between available resources to meet the health and social care needs of the population of Barnet (including children), by both improving services for health and social care and helping people to move as close as possible to a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing.
- Specific responsibilities for overseeing public health and developing further health and social care integration

5.5 Risk Management

5.5.1 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 CMY if necessary.

5.6 Equalities and Diversity

5.6.1 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

5.6.2 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

5.6.3 In addition all templates should advise the inclusion of:

- Up to date information about the Equalities impact of the proposal and details of how this has been assessed
- Sources of data
- Assessment of equalities risks and what has been done to mitigate them

Advice on completing Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) can be found [here](#).

5.7 Corporate Parenting

5.7.1 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.'

5.7.2 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.

5.8 Consultation and Engagement

Not applicable

5.9 Insight

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

6 Environmental impact

6.1 There are no direct environmental implications from noting the recommendations.

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 None