

## Children, Education & Safeguarding Committee

**17 November 2022**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Family Services Quarterly Update</b>
<b>Report of</b>	Chair of the Committee, Councillor Coakley-Webb
<b>Wards</b>	All
<b>Status</b>	Public
<b>Urgent</b>	No
<b>Key</b>	Yes
<b>Enclosures</b>	<p>Appendix 1 – Children’s Services Analysis Tool (ChAT)</p> <p>Appendix 2 – MASH Annual Report to the BSCP</p> <p>Appendix 3 – Private Fostering Annual Report to the BSCP</p> <p>Appendix 4 – Complaints Annual Report</p> <p>Appendix 5 – National Advisor on Leaving Care formal letter</p> <p>Appendix 6 – Early Help Strategy for consultation</p>
<b>Officer Contact Details</b>	Chris Munday, Executive Director for Children’s Services

### Summary

This report gives an update on Family Services progress and asks Members to scrutinise performance data, that can be found in Appendix 1.

### Officers Recommendations

- 1. That the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee is asked to note and provide comments on the ChAT performance report summarised in this report and Appendix 1.**
- 2. That the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee is asked to note and provide comments on the MASH Annual Report to the Barnet Safeguarding Children’s Partnership Quality Assurance Group**

<p><b>3. That the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee is asked to note and provide comments on the Private Fostering Annual Report to the Barnet Safeguarding Children’s Partnership Quality Assurance Group</b></p>
<p><b>4. That the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee is asked to approve the Annual Complaints Report.</b></p>
<p><b>5. That the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee is asked to note the letter from the National Care Leaver Advisor and request that the Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel to oversee the development and monitoring of actions to be taken.</b></p>
<p><b>6. That the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee is asked to approve the Early Help strategy for public consultation. The strategy will be brought back to committee for approval in January 2023.</b></p>

**1. Why this report is needed**

- 1.1 Family Services performance update provides members with an overview of the key data items used by the service to measure performance and identify opportunities for strategic development as well as lines of enquiry to ensure standards and statutory obligations are met. A copy of the full performance report is available in appendix 1.
- 1.2 The MASH Annual Report was presented to the partnership at the Barnet Safeguarding Children’s Partnership Quality Assurance Group in October. It includes a review of the performance of the service as well as areas for development, which include the wider safeguarding partnership who in the meeting confirmed their commitment to the objectives set out in the paper.
- 1.3 A privately fostered child as defined in the Children Act 1989, is a child under the age of 16 (under 18 if disabled) who is cared for, or it is proposed to be cared for, and provided with accommodation by someone other than a parent, a person who has parental responsibility for the child, a close relative of the child (i.e. a brother, sister, uncle, aunt or grandparent (whether full blood or half blood or by marriage or civil partnership) or stepparent). A child is only considered privately fostered if the person caring for them cares for them in their own home and with the intention that this arrangement will last for more than 28 days (4 weeks).
  - 1.3.1 Private fostering continues to be an area that is under-reported with the majority of studies and Local Authority data collections under-representing the true number of privately fostered children. Under the revised legislation, The Children (Private Arrangements for Fostering) Regulations (2005), the person who proposed to privately foster a child (the private foster carer) must notify the local authority of the proposal at least 6 weeks before the arrangement is to commence. Any person who is involved in the arrangement, such as a parent, carer or school must notify the local authority 3 as soon as possible after the arrangement has been made.
  - 1.3.2 The Private Fostering Annual Report details the current data for this cohort of children and young people, and proposals for next steps for the partnership to build on. It was presented to the partnership at the Barnet Safeguarding Children’s Partnership Quality

Assurance Group in October and partners expressed support for the proposals to further increase the number of Privately Fostered Children known to Barnet.

- 1.4 On the 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> September 2022, Mark Riddell, National Advisor for Care leavers visited Barnet and met with care experienced young adults, the Onwards and Upwards team, Councillors, Senior leaders, and a number of partners who support our young people. Following the visit we received the formal letter on the visit in which he states: “I was very impressed by the leadership and management approach that was ambitious, aspirational and I got a real sense of passion and commitment to have a better offer for care leavers across the whole service area. What I also saw and heard was many examples where I felt an exceptional approach was being offered and in particular the team approach which stood out with workers who were highly responsive to the needs of care leavers. The local authority are in a good position to get to being great for care leavers.”

He met with a group of care experienced young people and was impressed with their feedback. They were confident and honest in their conversation and spoke about that they feel very supported by their PA's and that Woodhouse Road Centre is a great resource. They spoke about their views on the local offer and these will be an important part of the current work on refreshing our offer for all our care experienced young people.

Mark Riddell was accompanied by Deputy Director May, DfE, and her feedback on the visit was “I had an excellent visit and was blown away, in particular, by the quality of care and passion that the team have – the young people I spent time with were phenomenal; I feel privileged to have heard their stories and to understand more about how the service offer has supported their successes”.

The letter set out recommendations for us to consider, some of which are developments that we have already initiated as part of our service development work, in the review of the local offer and our engagement with the London Compact work.

## **2. Reasons for recommendations**

### **2.1 Family Services Performance Update**

- 2.2 Capacity in the system remains stable, though contacts into the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), the first point of referral for the public and professionals about children and young people, are down from 11056 in the last report to 10417 in September's reporting period. This is likely to be a seasonal change due to the school summer holidays (appendix 1). This has been mirrored by a decrease the number of Early Help Assessments from 2045 to 1788, and referrals up slightly from 1503 to 1568.

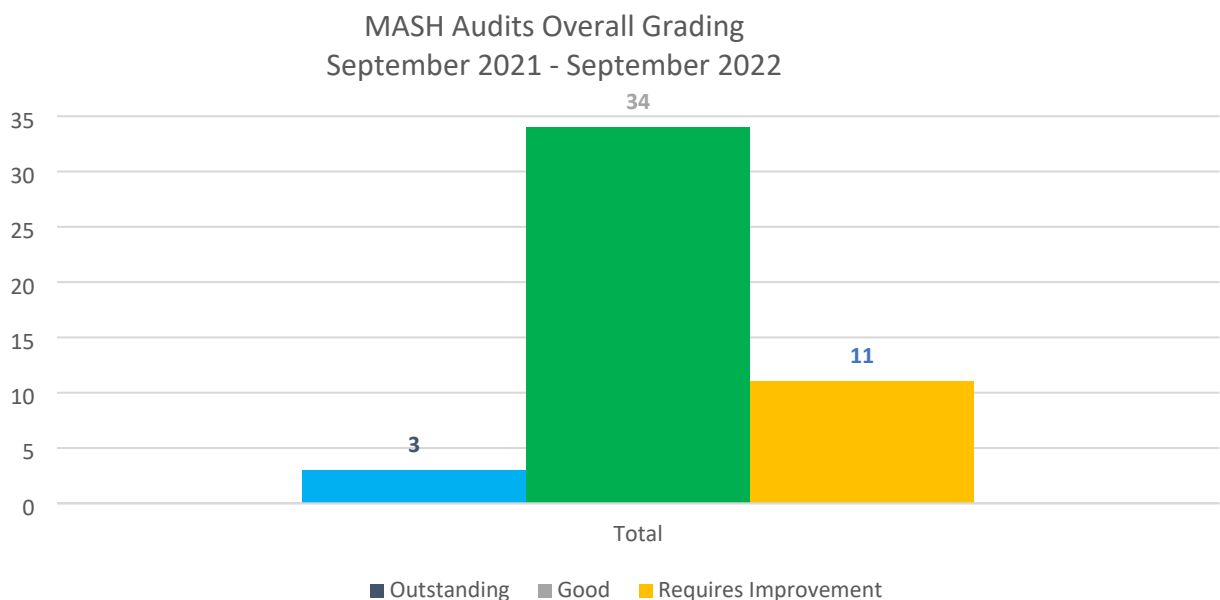
- 2.3 The timeliness of completed assessments remains an area of focus for performance, with the CHAT (appendix 1) showing in the ChAT, currently at 70% within timescales. The Assistant Head of Service has implemented weekly performance meetings with Team Managers to ensure robust scrutiny and oversight on compliance to timescales in the service, and a new weekly assessments report is be circulated to all managers so that all can be accountable for understanding the performance in their teams.

2.4 The number of children looked after continues remain stable with some slight reductions, in this period from 330 to 323, though the number of new children looked after increased from 67 to 76. 14% of children coming into care were unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, a small decrease from 9% in the previous period. There has been a decrease in the number of Care Leavers, currently at 322 young people because a number have past their 25<sup>th</sup> birthday.

2.5 The number of children who are accessing their annual dental check is slowly recovering. 59% of children are recorded to have had their annual dental check. Having reviewed all children who have not had dental checks we can see that 34 children are under 3 years old (10% of children in care) and may not have had their first dental check as yet and there is a target group of adolescents who have been resistant to attend these appointments and are the focus of our work with the LAC Health Team to improve this position. We are also working to ensure that foster carers and key workers inform us promptly about these visits so that the records can be kept up to date.

## 2.6 MASH Annual Report

2.7 The Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) Team is the first point of entry for referrals about children and young people made by professionals, families and the public. Here, referrals are screened and filtered to the correct service. Over the past 12 months, despite the challenges of the pandemic and post pandemic the MASH has continued to provide a timely and effective response as the front door to Children’s Services. Our approach continues to ensure children, young people and their families receive the right help, first time. This has been evidenced **throughout the pandemic and now post**



**pandemic with good multi-agency working and positive audit outcomes which demonstrate consistently good and during this period some outstanding practice.**

2.8 MASH has seen a stabilisation of workforce and additional support being used during and post pandemic to ensure child and family needs are met. This has included positive

collaboration with key stakeholders including the voluntary sector and Early Help Hubs to manage the response to the pandemic to the most vulnerable residents and addressing concerns about school attendance arrangements. This has led to an Early Help worker post being created for the MASH to consolidate this. **That the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee is asked to note and provide comments on the offer of further support for partners to better understand universal plus resource and Early Help Assessments (EHA's).**

2.9 Systemic Practice Training has been completed for all MASH managers and some of the social workers. This will continue to be extended to the MASH workforce, and there is consistent use of models of practice including Signs of Safety. We have linked social workers in MASH to Child Exploitation, PREVENT, LADO, Faith Communities, Housing, GP's, MARAC and MAPPA. The impact of this work, and areas for focus for the year ahead, are presented in the MASH Annual Report in Appendix 2.

## 2.10 Private Fostering Annual Report

2.11 In February 2019, OFSTED completed a 3-week inspection under the revised and flexible framework known as Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS). During this inspection, where Barnet Family Services was judged as Good, Inspectors noted that:

“Children living in private fostering arrangements are safeguarded effectively. They are visited regularly and are seen alone. Assessments of need are up to date, and children are given the opportunity to talk about any concerns or worries they may have about living away from their families.”

Since then the private fostering service in Barnet has continued to evolve. Both the assessment and support of private fostering families sits within the Carer Support Team and is allocated to one dedicated worker (the Private Fostering Social Work Lead), who works the respective cases from referral to closure. The current Private Fostering Lead is an experienced Advanced Practitioner who has extensive knowledge of the regulations together with safeguarding experience.

2.12 The data in the annual report shows that there has been a decrease in the number of Private Fostering notifications since 2021, and the report in appendix 3 provides strategies for improving this figure with renewed publicity and partnership focus on this cohort of children.

Financial Year	No. of notifications
2016- 2017	11
2017- 2018	16
2018 – 2019	10
2019 – 2020	17
2020-2021	17
2021-2022	4
April 22- September 22	9

## 2.13 Annual Complaints Report

- 2.14 Each year the Council produces an annual complaints report (appendix 4). The report set out the nature of complaints and compliments. It considers the outcomes from Ombudsman investigations. It is important that the service is a learning organisation and when things go wrong that lessons are learnt. The report indicates some positive improvements in terms of complaints handling and outcomes.
- 2.15 **Early Help Strategy**
- 2.16 At appendix 6 is the draft Early Help strategy is attached. Barnet's 0-19 Early Help Services are monitored for quality and effectiveness by the multi-agency partnership of 0-19 Early Help Strategic Board ('the Board') which meets quarterly. The Board is comprised of partners from education, health, housing, police, early years, local authority and voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise partners.
- 2.17 The Board oversees the development of a 0-19 Early Help Strategy which is updated every four years. The Board, through its multi-agency arrangements have delivered against the aims of the 2018 – 2022 Early Help Strategy, which saw the development of the 0-19 Early Help Hubs as a place-based offer in three locality areas across the borough.
- 2.18 The implementation of our Hub Model, promoted co-location and joint working for all children aged 0-19, enabling expertise of practitioners working in early years, family support and youth workers to work using a 'whole family' approach. Each of the 0-19 Early Help Hubs holds a quarterly Early Help Advisory Board meeting which is comprised of local agencies providing services and parents, the activity and progress of the Advisory Boards are reported into the 0-19 Early Help Strategic Board.
- 2.19 Through delivery of the 2018-2022 Strategy, weekly multi-agency panels were developed, strengthening whole system support around children and families, as the first point of contact with 0-19 Early Help Services.
- 2.20 The multi-agency partnership held an away day on 6 July 2022 to consider the development of a refreshed 0-19 Early Help Strategy for 2023 – 2027, this provided a draft which was further considered at the 0-19 Early Help Strategic Board on 8 September and with Early Years and Early Help Managers on 13 October 2022.
- 2.21 The next steps for the development of the draft 0-19 Strategy 2023 – 2027 are to hold a six-week period of public and member consultation between 21 November to 31 December 2022. The consultation period will facilitate feedback and co-production of the final 0-19 Early Help Strategy 2023 – 2027 through on-line surveys for children, parents and professionals , focus groups with children, focus groups with parents, a focus group with members and a focus group with voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise providers. The consultation period will inform the final strategy which, if approved by Committee, will be launched and published on 1 February 2023 .

### **3. Post decision implementation**

- 3.1 N/A

### **4. Implications of decision**

#### **4.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance**

- 4.1.1 Family Friendly is a key driver of our corporate planning 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 Legal and Constitutional References**

- 4.3.1 Local authorities have specific duties in respect of children under various legislation including the Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004. They have a general duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need in their area and, if this is consistent with the child’s safety and welfare, to promote the upbringing of such children by their families by providing services appropriate to the child’s needs. They also have a duty to promote the upbringing of such children by their families, by providing services appropriate to the child’s needs, provided this is consistent with the child’s safety and welfare. They should do this in partnership with parents, in a way that is sensitive to the child’s race, religion, culture and language and that, where practicable, takes account of the child’s wishes and feelings. 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”.

- 4.3.2 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

- 4.3.3 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.'

#### **4.4 Insight**

4.4.1 Family Services uses a comprehensive suite of performance information to support decision making, including local and regional datasets, audit and financial analysis. This information is scrutinised by Senior Leaders in a variety of forums including Placement Board, Performance Board, MTFS Board and in quarterly meetings with the Lead Member for Children and Families, and the Chief Executive.

#### **4.5 Social Value**

4.5.1 All commissioning activity includes social value as a standard monitoring item.

#### **4.6 Risk Management**

4.6.1 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.

#### **4.7 Equalities and Diversity**

4.7.1 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

4.7.2 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

4.7.3 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.

#### **4.8 Corporate Parenting**

4.8.1 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.'



4.8.2 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.

#### **4.9 Consultation and Engagement**

4.9.1 My Say Matters, the Family Services consultation and participation programme, has been launched and the quarterly updates will report on activity in this programme

#### **4.10 Environmental Impact**

4.10.1 N/A

### **5. Background papers**

None