

Children and Education Overview & Scrutiny Sub-Committee

Title	Family Services Quarterly Update
Date of meeting	6 June 2024
Report of	Executive Director for Children's Services
Wards	All
Status	Public
Urgent	No
Appendices	Appendix A – Children's Services Analysis Tool (ChAT) Performance 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 scrutinise performance data.

Recommendations

1. That the Children and Education Overview & Scrutiny Committee is asked to note and comment on the service update in this report.
2. That the Children and Education Overview & Scrutiny Committee is asked to note and comment on the ChAT performance report summarised in this report and in appendix.

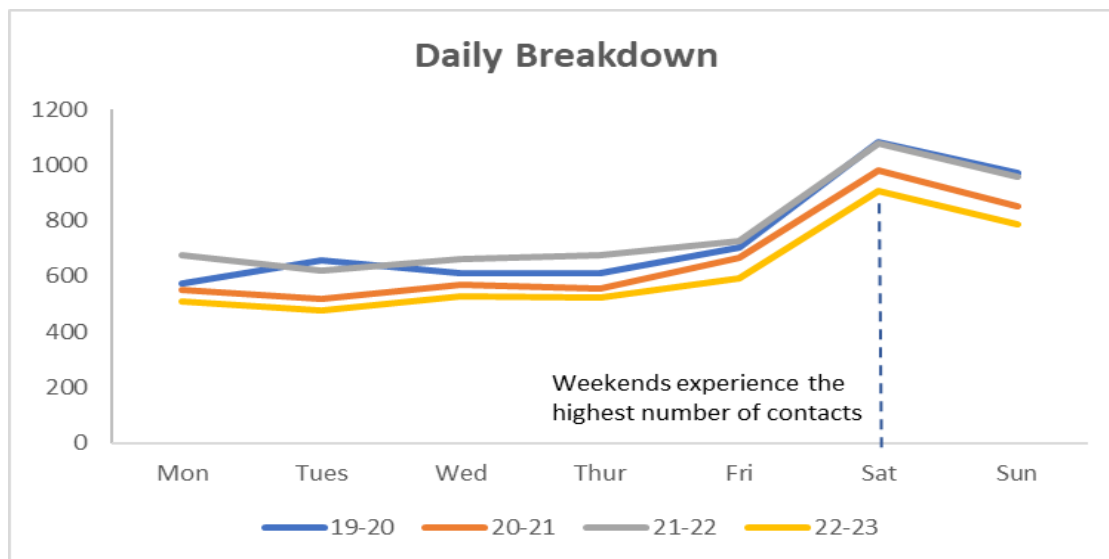
1. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 1.1 This quarterly update summarises key service initiatives and performance data since the last reporting period. Corporate Parenting reports and updates will be presented to the Children and Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting in a separate report.

Out of Hours Service Changes

- 1.2 The provision of an out-of-hours social work service is a statutory duty for local authorities. The Out Of Hours' (OOH) service is required to operate Monday to Friday from 5:00 pm to 9:00 am daily and is available 24 hours on weekends and bank holidays. The London Borough of Barnet (LBB) and the London Borough of Harrow (LBH) have shared an out-of-hours social work service for more than 20 years. LBB entered into a formal contractual arrangement with LBH for the delivery of OOH services in 2016, covering both children and adults. The OOH's contract provided for 5.5 social workers and one Manager. The service was largely telephone-based and all calls triaged through CAPITA.
- 1.3 In 2023, a review of the OOH's service was undertaken in response to LBH's proposed 23.8% increase in contract value (bringing the total value of the contract to £346,648) and to ensure the service was effective and provided value for money. The review enabled consideration of alternative models of delivery, including ending the contractual arrangement with LBH and bringing the service in-house. This update sets out the findings and decision to bring the delivery of the service in-house.
- 1.4 The review found that the service operated effectively but with limitations as an outsourced provider i.e. access to IT systems, recording practices, data insights, quality assurance, handovers, tailored and seamless interface with the daytime service. The review examined demand, finding that, on average, most calls pertained to children's services (75%) and more than two-thirds (68%) of the activity recorded is relative to notifications of children reported as missing/returned from missing living in residential establishments. OOH's services are most active between 5 pm – 10pm on weekdays, with call volumes reducing significantly after 11pm. Weekends evidence a higher volume of activity, particularly on Saturday's.

Daily Breakdown of OOH's contact volume Jan – Oct 2021



- 1.5 The report findings led to a decision to bring the service in-house to improve the overall quality of practice and control spend on the service. Formal notice was given to LBH in November 2023 with an agreed extension of the contract to 30 June 2024 to allow for recruitment, and safe handover of the service.
- 1.6 A new model has been developed which will go live on 1 July 2024. The model employs three Out of Hours Social Work Managers, working on rota. The model will be resilient with a bank of internal qualified social work managers (to provide cover for core shifts in the event of an absence). They will largely operate on-line and on the telephone, supported by an internal 'bank' of on-call social workers (currently 15 have signed up) operating 7 days a week between the hours of 5pm – 10pm. Social workers will, in turn, be further supported by another 'bank' of Grade I practitioners, including newly qualified social workers who will provide additional on-call support Friday – Sunday when OOH's activity is highest.
- 1.7 The new model will provide greater opportunity for face-to-face contact with children, enable children to be safeguarded and seen in places of safety i.e. police stations and hospitals. The additional support available at weekends will enable safe facilitation of home visits, provide some capacity to prevent family breakdown and the need for children to enter into alternative care arrangements.
- 1.8 The in-house OOH's social work model will meet the recommendations of the pan-London review of Out of Hours Services conducted in 2022 by the London Safeguarding Children Partnership and it will deliver a responsive service that will:
- Provide professionals and members of the public with telephone access to a qualified social worker outside of office hours.
 - Employ Out of Hours shift leaders at a level of seniority to make timely decisions and coordinate activities to safeguard children.
 - Ensure children are seen and transferred to appropriate family or care arrangements, minimising time spent in emergency service settings (A&E, Police Stations).
 - Reduce the risk of out-of-hours family breakdown at the weekend through responsive social work and family support/youth work interventions.
 - Provide continuity and seamless transfer of information with MASH, Early Help, Social Work Teams, and wider organisational departments as necessary.

- Provide an opportunity to strengthen working relationships with 24-hour services including but not exclusive to Adult Mental Health, Adult Social Care, Housing, local Hospitals, Police, Fire, and London Ambulance Services.
- Enable the children’s workforce to stretch their roles, experience, and skills, increase their earning capacity and support retention.
- Create a Bank of internal and externally recruited practitioners creating increased flexibility for delivery of services to children.

1.9 The model will interface with the Youth Justice Service, with the YJS ‘Engage’ Team (providing direct contact with children in police custody) and the Appropriate Adult Service as required. It will further interface with the Placements Team, Residential Units, LADO, Contact Service, Early Help, Adult Services and Children’s Social Care Teams building effective working relationships and clear operational protocols that promote timely exchange of information and clear expectations with agreed contingencies for a safe and effective out of hours service. It will also liaise with the council’s emergency planning response team, as appropriate.

1.10 The cost is estimated to be 280k once the new model is implemented for years 2024/25 and 2025/26. The budget in 2024/25 is above this expenditure which allows flexibility to respond to demand in the first year of delivery, however it may be reduced for 2025/26.

Consideration of implementing the Young Carers MOU

1.11 LB Barnet commissions Barnet Young Carers Service (BYCAS) to assess and support the needs of Young Carers; an Early Help Assessment framework is used. All identified Young Carers across the children’s social care and Early Help systems are recorded and referred to BYCAS at multiple points. Children and families have to agree to receive an assessment and support. BYCAS currently provides a strong offer including bespoke support, advice, training, and activities.

1.12 A Memorandum of Understanding, as produced by the Carers Trust in “No Wrong Doors for Young Carers” (February 2024), is a template for a whole-system approach to identifying and supporting young carers, young adult carers and their families, ensuring that young carers can receive the support they and their family’s need early. The whole system includes Integrated Care Boards, local authorities and other key stakeholders.

1.13 The key principles of the MoU are:

- The primary responsibility for responding to the needs of young carers and young adult carers, and ensuring an appropriate assessment is completed, rests with the service responsible for assessing the person they support, rather than depending on the age of the carer.
- Practitioners across Adult Social Care, Children’s Services and health settings working with individuals with care and support needs and their families have an equally important role in identifying potential young carers at the earliest opportunity.
- The starting point should be to assess the needs of the adult or child who needs care and support and then see what remaining needs for support a young carer in the family has.
- The presence of a young carer in the family will always constitute an appearance of need and should trigger either an assessment, or the offer of an assessment, to the person needing care.
- Where there are children in the family providing care to an adult or undertaking wider caring responsibilities, a ‘whole-family’ approach is key when assessing the adult needing care. The adult’s assessment and eligibility for support should take into account their parenting responsibilities and the impact of the care and support needs on the family.

- Assessments should ascertain why a child is caring and what needs to change in order to prevent them from undertaking excessive or inappropriate caring responsibilities which could impact adversely on their welfare, education, or social development. The views of both adults and children within the family should be sought separately where appropriate, so as to ensure individual family members have the opportunity to speak openly about their situation and need for support.
- Consideration must be given to whether a young carer is a ‘child in need’ under the Children Act 1989, and whether their welfare or development may suffer if support is not provided to them and/or their family.

1.14 Barnet’s Young Carers Strategy 2023–28 sets out our commitment to identifying and support young carers. The adoption of the No Wrong Door MoU will strengthen and support the strategy by further integrating our approach with health and adult services, supporting identification and transitions.

1.15 A task and finish group will be established with key stakeholders including Young Carers and their families, to guide the development and implementation of the MoU. This will include a communications campaign aimed at raising awareness among children and professionals, promoting identification and signposting to assessment and support of their needs.

1.16 Barnet Carers Centre are currently developing updated materials for a ‘think carer’ approach and have produced a film: Barnet Young Carers - We know what to do. | Smiley Charity Film Awards. The Carers Centre has also updated resources for schools, GPs, and a range of wider professionals bodies; the MoU would enable co-branding on future publicity materials. A communications plan for the resources and new Barnet Carers support (charity funded) has been drafted which the MoU principles can be added to.

1.17 Adoption of the No Wrong Doors for Young Carers MoU will help to ensure that the council and NHS comply with their legislative duties towards young carers, young adult carers and their families under the Care Act 2014, Children Act 1989 and Health and Care Act 2022. The signatories will include Adults and Children’s Social Care Services and Integrated Care Boards but can include wider signatories to reflect their local context and priorities.

Healthy Child Programme Update

1.18 The Healthy Child Programme (HCP) includes Health Visiting, School Nursing, Healthy weight Nurses and Infant feeding Support. These services transferred to the Whittington Health NHS Trust on 1st April 2024. The mechanism for this arrangement is through a S75 agreement between the Council and Whittington Health which was signed and sealed on 30th April 2024¹.

1.19 Whittington Health NHS Trust already deliver the Healthy Child Programme in three of the five NCL boroughs: Haringey and Islington and has delivered the Barnet Integrated Therapy Service for children since January 2022. This arrangement supports our vision for a more integrated community offer, across health and social care, for children living in Barnet. The Trust is rated ‘outstanding’ for being caring and the Care Quality Commission noted, in their inspection, that the organisation belongs to their staff and that “everyone goes the extra mile for patients”.

¹ A S75 allows for arrangements between NHS Bodies and Local Authorities and provides a framework for a partnership arrangement.

1.20 Wittington Health has reported that the transfer has gone well without interruption to delivery of services and that staff morale is positive. Experienced senior colleagues from the HCP in Haringey are supporting while permanent recruitment progresses. The focus has been on building up the service post transfer and early priorities include:

- Staff support
- Safeguarding activity
- Recruitment of HV's and converting agency to substantive
- Reducing backlogs
- Developing a transformation plan to implement from June.

Family Services Performance Update (ChAT)

1.21 This is a summary of Children's services analysis tool (appendix A) for the current reporting period, covering six months up to 7 April 2024. The ChAT report template has been updated to include the following:

- Benchmarking has been updated to 2023 for the charts comparing statistical neighbours and England.
- In page 13, Children Looked After (CLA) with an open episode of care, Permanency Plans Status has data populated in it.
- There are extra visualisations on Care Leavers around eligibility, however these are not currently populated as we do not currently pull data on eligible CIC that are 16 and 17 years old.

1.22 Contacts:

- In the current reporting period, at 7 April 2024, there have been 9,572 contacts to the MASH, which is 16% lower than the previous reporting period (six months up to 7 January 2024) and 11% lower than for the same reporting period last year. The reduction follows a series of whole system webinars on the Continuum of Help and Support delivered by Family Services in partnership with Barnet Safeguarding Children Partnership.
- **23%** of all contacts into the MASH step up to a referral to Children's Social Care, the other 77% either go to Early Help or receive support and signposting to Universal/Universal Plus Services.
- Contact sources that have referred the most within the previous 6 months follow usual patterns with the Police representing over a quarter of all contacts coming into the MASH (26%), followed by Health Services (18%) and then Schools (16%). These contact patterns can fluctuate with seasonal activity i.e. school holiday periods.

1.23 Early Help:

- There has been a 9% increase of Early Help Assessments (EHA) in this reporting period when compared to the previous reporting period at January 2024 (n=1,814), however EHA are 4% lower than for the same period a year ago.
- **1979** Early Help Assessments have been completed in the previous 6 months with the most contacts coming from the East of the borough which is where our most deprived Lower Super Output Areas are located.
- **12%** of Early Help Assessments have previously had a children's social care referral.

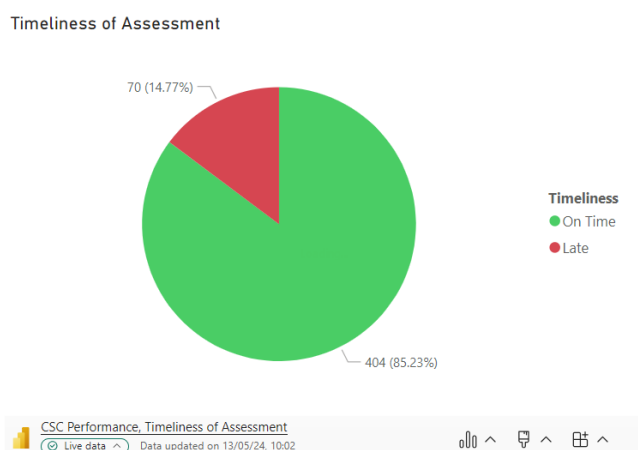
1.24 Referrals:

- There were 1,489 referrals to Children's Social Care in the current period, which is at a slightly higher (4%) to those reported in the previous period (n=1,419), and 11% higher than the same reporting period last year (n= 1,334).

- Re-referral rates are currently 12% which is 6% below our Statistical Neighbours (18%) and 9% the England Average (21%).

1.25 Assessments:

- Assessments completed in 45 Days is currently at 66% which is below the statistical neighbour average of 82%. This data reflects a higher volume of closed assessments following a period where assessments took longer to complete due to staffing challenges in the assessment teams earlier in the year. Live data reported on PowerBi indicates 85% of Social Work Assessments are completed in 45 days; this is due to stabilisation in the workforce achieved through a range of system initiatives.



1.26 Section 47s:

- **11%** of Children subject to a section 47 have had a previous section 47 within the last 6 months, 68% of section 47s did not require an Initial Child Protection Conference, these are largely due to inappropriate physical chastisement that can be addressed through parenting intervention on a Child in Need Plan.
- Of the 91% of children that went onto a Child Protection Plan, none previously had an ICPC within the previous 6 months.
- **71%** of ICPCs occurred within 15 days of the strategy discussion date. Delay can occur when there are challenges in securing parent availability and interpreters.

1.27 Children in Need:

- There are currently 1812 children in need with an open episode of need, a 30% increase compared to the same period last year. Although Barnet has had low Children in Need per 10,000 figures, The total number of Children in Need per 10,000 being opened and closed has risen and is now in line with our statistical neighbours and the England average.

1.28 Child Protection:

- The total number of children on Child Protection Plans remain fairly static (258 for the current reporting period). CPP Re-registrations are currently at 22% which is higher than our statistical neighbours and national averages, this data has been reviewed and shows 80% these children have a gap exceeding 1 year from the prior CPP. Many of the remaining 20% had been made subject to a subsequent CPP due to the conclusion of Family Proceedings resulting in the making of a Supervision Order.

1.29 Looked After Children:

- **22 (28%)** of the 80 new CLA Episodes started during the previous 6 months were Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)

- Due to timeliness of recording, CLA Reviews, Health Assessment and Dental Checks have higher figures when re-run historically so is not a true representation of performance for these indicators.
- Among the reasons why an episode of care ceased for children, most are coded as 'other' (23%) meaning that they have turned 18 and are care leavers, closely followed by the commencement of Special Guardianship Orders (22%). SGOs have almost doubled from the last reporting period (12), and a 33% increase from the same reporting period last year. This is in line with the Children Social Care National Framework guidance that children social care works in partnership with whole family networks.

1.30 Care Leavers:

- In Touch is currently at 100% for both 17 to 18 year-olds and 19 to 21 years-olds.
- Accommodation Suitability is at 97%, unsuitable accommodation will be those currently in custody or in between accommodation options and living with friends or family.
- Education, Employment and Training is currently 65% at point of running ChAT – when these figures were rerun it currently notes 67.4% which is higher than the England average and our statistical neighbours.

2. Alternative Options Considered and Not Recommended

2.1. None

3. Post Decision Implementation

3.1. None

4. Corporate Priorities, Performance and Other Considerations

Corporate Parenting

- 4.1 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.'
- 4.2 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

Risk management

4.3 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.

Insight

4.4 Family Services uses a comprehensive suite of performance information, as part of its self-assessment and to support decision making and, 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 quarterly meetings with the Lead Member for Children and Families, and the Chief Executive.

Social Value

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

5. Resource Implications (Finance and Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT and Property)

5.1 None in the context of this report

6. Legal Implications and Constitution References

6.1 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.

6.2 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".

6.3 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

6.4 Under the Barnet Constitution Part 2 C, the Children & Education Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee shall perform the overview and scrutiny role and function in relation to:

- All matters as that relate to Children’s Social Care
- All matters which relate to services pertaining to the education and well-being of children and young people including youth services.
- Receive and comment upon any external inspections and reviews.

7. Consultation

7.1 My Say Matters is the Family Services consultation and participation programme for children and young people.

8. Equalities and Diversity

8.1 Decision makers should have due regard to the public sector equality duty in carrying out its statutory duties.

8.2 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.

8.3 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.

8.4 Equalities and diversity considerations are a key element of social work practice. It is imperative that help and protection services for children and young people 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

9. Background Papers

9.1 None