

**Decision Maker:** CARE SERVICES POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

**Date:** Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> December 2016

**Decision Type:** Non-Urgent Non-Executive Non-Key

**Title:** CHILDREN'S SERVICES IMPROVEMENT PLAN UPDATE

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**Chief Officer:** Ade Adetosoye, Deputy Chief Executive, ECHS Department

**Ward:** Borough-wide

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1. Reason for report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the progress of the Children's Services Improvement Plan which was agreed by the Executive on the 14<sup>th</sup> September 2016. The attached Appendix 1 provides an update on the plan as at the end of Quarter 2.
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2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 Members of the Care Services PDS Committee are invited to note and comment on the contents of this report and the progress of the Children's Services Improvement Plan.

### Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: Not Applicable
  2. BBB Priority: Children and Young People Excellent Council:
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### Financial

1. Cost of proposal: Not Applicable:
  2. Ongoing costs: Not Applicable:
  3. Budget head/performance centre: New Funding being requested
  4. Total current budget for this head: £0
  5. Source of funding: Supplementary Estimate
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### Staff

1. Number of staff (current and additional):
  2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours: N/A
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### Legal

1. Legal Requirement: Statutory Requirement:
  2. Call-in: Not Applicable: No Executive Decision
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### Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected): Approx. 300 CLA, 280 subject to a child protection plan and 2,000 children in need
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### Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? Not Applicable
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments:

### 3. COMMENTARY

#### 3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 The Council's services for children in need of help and protection and children looked after were inspected by Ofsted between 11 April and 5 May 2016. Ofsted also carried out an inspection of the Bromley Safeguarding Children Board at the same time. The Ofsted report published on 27 June 2016 detailed the following judgements:

Overall Judgement	Inadequate
1. Children in need of help and protection	Inadequate
2. Children looked after and achieving permanence	Inadequate
2.1 Adoption performance	Inadequate
2.2 Experiences and progress of care leavers	Inadequate
3. Leadership, management and governance	Inadequate

#### 3.2 Children's Commissioner appointed by the Department for Education

3.2.1 The Secretary of State under the provisions of Section 497 A appointed a Children's Commissioner to assess the service and make a recommendation on how to improve children's services in Bromley. Frankie Sulke CBE was appointed to the post of Children's Commissioner in June 2016 and worked alongside Children's Services colleagues and partner agencies to complete her assessment of the service. The report was shared with Ministers in September 2016, who have accepted the positive direction of travel indicated and agreed with the recommendation that they employ a DfE Commissioner to undertake a further six months of scrutiny to ensure that there is continued progress. The full report can be viewed here. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bromley-childrens-services-report-to-the-secretary-of-state>

#### 3.3 Post Ofsted activity

3.3.1 The Executive set up a member-led Improvement Board and an officer Service Improvement Team Meeting, both with independent external support, to address shortcomings identified by Ofsted. Members are being supported in their role as Corporate Parent's with an updated training programme covering a range of topics including early intervention, safeguarding, effective collaboration and service improvement. Two training sessions have been held to date; 'Bromley Looked After Children & The Fostering Role' optional training for all members on 26 September 2016 and 'Early Intervention & Family Support' essential training for the Lead Member and Care Services PDS Committee Members on 13 October 2016.

3.3.2 The Children's Services Improvement Plan was developed in conjunction with partner agencies, was submitted to Ofsted in September 2016. The plan has 10 priorities (see below) which cover the 23 Ofsted recommendations.

Priority	Area
1	Leadership and Governance
2	Management Oversight and Quality Assurance
3	Bromley Safeguarding Children Board
4	Safeguarding
5	Children Looked After
6	Care Leavers
7	Adoption Services
8	Tackling child sexual exploitation, children missing and gangs
9	Strategic Commissioning
10	Legal Services

- 3.3.3 Ofsted has confirmed that the plan is ambitious, comprehensive and covers all the report recommendations. They have also said that the outcomes are clear and the service has set out the required processes needed to be put in place or revised in order to enable us to improve practice. Ofsted have also commented positively on the authority's governance and oversight arrangements.
- 3.3.4 The plan is being monitored on a monthly basis by the Children's Service Improvement Team who are responsible for reviewing if actions have been completed within published timescales. Monitoring reports are shared with the Children's Service Improvement Governance Board and Service Improvement Team to review progress being made. The Quarter 2 monitoring report is attached as appendix 1.
- 3.3.5 As part of monitoring the Improvement Plan, the Children's Service Improvement Team identify and record known concerns and risks that will delay the completion of the Improvement plan in the 'Risk Log'. These concerns are shared with Senior Managers as part of the update included in the Monitoring reports.

### **3.4 Progress made against Children's Services Improvement Plan**

- 3.4.1 The Executive has evidenced its commitment to supporting the implementation of the improvement plan by agreeing to fund £950K extra over two phases with plans for a third stage to bring the total to £2.3 million. This funding has been used to recruit 27 additional posts which include:
- A new Executive Director of Education and Children's Services
  - An additional Head of Service to focus on Safeguarding and Care Planning
  - Three additional Group Managers (Court Team, Connected Persons & Fostering Team)
  - Fourteen social workers
  - Additional independent Child Protection Chair
  - Extra administration support (including social work assistants)
  - An Audit and Practice Manager
- 3.4.2 As a result of this there has already been a reduction in average caseloads for social workers in some frontline teams such as Safeguarding and Care Planning Teams (17 cases), Referral and Assessment Service (20 cases) and Connected Person and Special Guardianship Team (17 cases). In September 2016, the service also recruited a Children's Commissioner to lead on all commissioning arrangements and has been involved with a number of initiatives linked to the improvement plan including CSE/Missing and Gangs.
- 3.4.3 Human Resources have reviewed the recruitment package offered to Social Care staff which for most departments is competitive and comparable with other Local Authorities. For areas of the service where this is not the case, a review group has been set up to look at packages available and will be making recommendation to the Director of Human Resources. Additional resources such as the Bromley Council website will be refreshed by an external organisation in order to create an online recruitment video in order to encourage people to apply for vacancies within the Council.
- 3.4.4 There has been a focus on improving internal communication between Senior Management and members of staff. The Chief Executive and Senior Management have introduced regular email updates to ensure that there is one clear message. These updates commenced following the outcome of the inspection and have been used to co-ordinate key messages such as the relaunch 'Building a Better Bromley' priorities now including a greater focus on children and young people.
- 3.4.5 A one year plan of auditing and practice improvement activity has been developed and commenced in October 2016. The first monthly audit commenced October 2016 and

comprised of 51 auditors from across Children's Social Care. Alongside the monthly auditing programme, additional quality assurance mechanisms include:

- An agreed programme of observations for all those within QI who chair conferences, reviews and strategy meetings.
- Chairs, IRO's and the LADO (local authority designated officer) located within the Quality Improvement Team will be subject to a minimum of two observations over a twelve month period by the Practice and Improvement Manager. Observations will focus on whether conferences and reviews are chaired assiduously and are they focused on outcomes for the child? Are we sufficiently robust in tracking decisions throughout our period of intervention and are these meetings meaningful? Do we fully include children and parents within these meetings?
- Minutes provided by the QI Service will be quality assured bi-monthly with feedback given to the individual concerned.

3.4.6 The Assistant Director for Children's Social Care and Heads of Service have increased scrutiny and challenge around standards of casework and decision making being made in the service. This has included the introduction of the Early Permanency Panel, a forum for senior managers to review and monitor the quality of work and decision making being made by social workers which has met 6 times since July 2016. During this period (July to October 2016) the panel has considered plans for 36 children, representing 12.5% of the Children Looked After population for that period. In one third (12) of these cases, recommended actions were completed within two weeks of the meeting. A further 41% (15) of cases completed actions within four weeks.

3.4.7 Children's Social Care has been working alongside other departments and partner agencies to progress joint initiatives and actions. This has included a joint agency working partnership, led by the Police to focus on children at risk of CSE/Missing and Gangs. The partnership which has met three times since July 2016 will co-ordinate the completion of actions outlined in the plan using a combined board work plan. The service has enlisted an administrator to facilitate the compilation of centralised intelligence and data of children at risk. The service intends to recruit a qualified practitioner to work as a co-ordinator to progress this further. Intelligence is being shared between Children's Social Care and Education to ensure that children and young people at risk are flagged up.

3.4.8 The authority commissioned a consultant from the DCLG to undertake a strategic needs analysis assessment of vulnerable homeless and Care Leavers to help inform LBB strategy. This has resulted in a detailed action plan which is being progressed by a cross departmental working group focusing on i) developing the accommodation pathway and commissioning strategy, ii) strengthening joint working and information sharing and iii) ensuring the correct resources are in the right place in order to strengthen intervention support and advice.

### **3.5 Ofsted Monitoring Visit – 8 and 9 November 2016**

3.5.1 The First Monitoring Visit took place on Tuesday 8 and Wednesday 9 November 2016 which was headed by Marcie Taylor, the lead inspector from the Single Inspection Framework. The inspection team comprised of three inspectors in total.

3.5.2 Inspectors spent the first day reviewing 6 cases from Children's Social Care's monthly audit cohort. These cases had first been audited in October 2016 and then reviewed by senior management to moderate judgements given. 4 out of the 6 cases were judged to be 'inadequate' and 2 were judged to be 'requires improvement'. The second day was spent 'case sampling' 15 cases chosen from the list of children and young people who have been involved with the service since June 2016, known as Annex A.

3.5.3 During the course of the two day visit inspectors interviewed 8 Social Workers, 8 Supervisors, 1 Group Manager, the Children's Commissioner and Deputy Director of Finance, 4 Heads of Service the Assistant Director for Children's Social Care and the Executive Director of ECHS & Deputy Chief Executive. They also contacted young people and parents/carers of children.

3.5.4 The inspection team provided verbal feedback to the service at the end of the monitoring visit. Ofsted will formally feedback findings from this visit in a letter to the Authority on Tuesday 6 December 2016. Feedback received by Ofsted for the first monitoring visit is not published.

### **3.6 Next Steps**

3.6.1 The date of the second monitoring visit is Wednesday 22 and Thursday 23 February 2017. Ofsted intend to use the same inspection team used in the first monitoring visit for consistency.

3.6.2 Refinement of the dataset that underpins the Children's Services Improvement Plan to enable reporting of key performance indicators to members. This will be supported by a series of sessions for members (commencing 12<sup>th</sup> January) on children's social care data.

3.6.3 The service will continue to progress changes to practice and performance as outlined in the Children's Services Improvement Plan 2016-2017.

## **4. IMPACT ON VULNERABLE ADULTS AND CHILDREN**

4.1 The full content of this report impacts on needs of vulnerable children and the required actions necessary to improve the services delivered.

## **5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 All actions within the draft improvement action plan are set in the context of the Building a Better Bromley Key Priorities for 2016—2018 by being ambitious for all our children and young people through:

- Fulfilling our duty of care to ensure the health, wellbeing and achievements of our vulnerable children.
- Provide the best possible service to deliver appropriate support to all children and young people.

By ensuring the best possible future for the children and young people of Bromley, with a clear focus on supporting the most vulnerable through:

- Safeguarding children and young people within schools and the community.
- Listening to the views of children and young people to influence the decisions that are made about them.
- Encouraging excellent educational opportunities from the early years through to further and higher education for all Bromley children and young people including those with Special Educational Needs.

5.2 These aims are covered by the both the Care Services and Education Portfolio Plans which are reported to the relevant PDS committees for approval (September/ October 2016) and monitoring January / March 2017.

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 At the meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> September the Executive agreed that Council be recommended to approve funding for the posts included in Phase One and Phase Two which have already been committed totalling £949k in 2016/17 with a full year effect of £1,471k as set out at paragraph 6.3 of Report CS17036; and that Council agree to release up to a further £141k in 2016/17 and a further £795k in a full year for Phase Three, with any utilisation of the monies being subject to approval by the Executive following an appropriate level of scrutiny. The expenditure plan is detailed below.

EXPENDITURE AS A RESULT OF OFSTED

	<u>Action Plan ID</u>	<u>FTE</u>	<u>2016/17</u> <u>£'000</u>	<u>2017/18</u> <u>£'000</u>	<u>Full year</u> <u>£'000</u>	<u>Comment</u>
<b>PHASE ONE</b>						
<b>Children's Social Care</b>						
Director ECHS	1.1	1	83	200	200	From Nov 16
Head of service (QI)	1.2.1	1	60	90	90	
<b>Safeguarding and Care Planning</b>						
DM Post Posts (court team)	1.2.1	1	34	52	52	
6 Advanced Practitioner Posts (court team)	1.2.1	6	207	310	310	
<b>Referral and Assessment</b>						
2 Senior Practitioner Posts	1.2.1	2	64	96	96	
<b>Care and Resources</b>						
Group Manager Leaving Care team (management capacity)	1.2.1	1	43	64	64	
Group Manager Special Guardianship	5.5.1	1	43	64	64	
Group Manager Adoption (management capacity)	7	1	43	64	64	
2 Social Work Assistant (Special Guardianship)	5.5.1	2	49	74	74	
<b>Quality Improvement Team</b>						
Administrator (CSE, Missing & Gangs)	8	1	20	30	30	
Strategic and business support (Policies and Procedures)	2.9.1	1	32	48	-	18 mth post
Child Protection / IRO Minute Taker (Risk assessments/ escalations)	5.2.3	1	16	24	24	
Child Protection Independent Chair	5.2.3	1	37	55	55	
<b>TOTAL PHASE ONE RESOURCES REQUESTED</b>		<b>20</b>	<b>731</b>	<b>1,171</b>	<b>1,123</b>	
<b>PHASE TWO</b>						
6 Senior Practitioner roles	1.2.1	6	158	288	288	From May 16
Quality Audit Manager	2.4, 2.6	1	60	60	60	From Sept 16
<b>TOTAL PHASE TWO RESOURCES REQUESTED</b>		<b>7</b>	<b>218</b>	<b>348</b>	<b>348</b>	
<b>PHASE THREE</b>						
Head of service (Safeguarding & Care Planning)	1.2.1	1	60	90	90	From Jan 2017
Safeguarding and care planning - DM Post	1.2.1	1	13	52	52	From Jan 2017
Safeguarding and care planning - 3 social workers	1.2.1	3	10	123	123	From Jan 2017
Recruitment & retention of social workers from 2017/18	2.11		-	300	300	
Quality Audits	2.2.1		38	150	150	From Jan 2017
Commissioning - Placement Officer	9.7.3	1	10	40	40	From Jan 2017
Commissioning - Monitoring Officer	9.8.2	1	10	40	40	From Jan 2017
<b>TOTAL PHASE THREE RESOURCES REQUESTED</b>		<b>7</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>795</b>	<b>795</b>	
<b>TOTAL RESOURCES REQUESTED</b>		<b>34</b>	<b>1,090</b>	<b>2,314</b>	<b>2,266</b>	

- 6.2 The last section (phase three) of £141k in year, £795k in a full year, will be reviewed by the new Executive Director who will review these spending plans and posts and update on the position and effectiveness of these posts on a regular basis.
- 6.3 It is essential that the effectiveness of the use of these additional resources are continuously reviewed to ensure the required outcomes are achieved.
- 6.4 It should also be noted that the latest Budget Monitoring report for 2016/17 reported to the meeting of the Executive on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2016 identified a projected overspend of £3.9m on children's social care and this position will be monitored closely.
- 6.5 In comparing Bromley costs against its statistical neighbours there are opportunities in the future to make better use of existing funding through the re-division of resources away from more expensive residential placements. There will be a need to review the allocation of resources within the next two years.

## **7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 The Secretary of State has extensive powers under the provisions of Section 497 A where a local authorities performance in the delivery of Children`s services is deemed to be inadequate.
- 7.2 The Secretary of State for Education ("the Secretary of State") has carefully considered the report of Frankie Sulke CBE dated September 2016, in respect of the London Borough of Bromley ("the Council), following Ofsted's inspection carried out between 11 April and 5 May 2016, which found that the Council's delivery of children's social care was inadequate overall and inadequate across all key sub-judgments.
- 7.3 The Secretary of State notes the recommendation of October 2016 report to the effect that the Council should retain control of children's social services for a period of six months, pending a further review of improvement progress.
- 7.4 The Secretary of State intends to appoint a Commissioner for Children's Services in Bromley ("the Children's Services Commissioner") in accordance with, and for the purposes of, the terms of reference ("the Terms of Reference") set out in the Annex to this direction.  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/558912/071016\\_FINAL\\_Direction\\_signed\\_Bromley.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/558912/071016_FINAL_Direction_signed_Bromley.pdf)

## **8. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 As stated in para 3.4 above, the immediate response to the recruitment challenges arising in part from the additional staffing has been relatively successful for example, the new Court Team of 6 new Senior Practitioner posts has been recruited into in a timely manner. The Executive Director, Education, Care & Health Services recruitment and selection process was recently completed within a relatively tight timeline, recognising the strategic importance of the role in the recovery journey.
- 8.2 Human Resources is working well with a number of employment agencies and in particular the Council's agency link contractor (Adecco) to improve the speed and quality of applicants/candidates for qualified/experienced children's social care staff. The Council's Recruitment and Retention package for children's social care staff is being further reviewed and benchmarked to ensure Bromley Council remains competitive in the labour market and the preferred destination for suitably qualified social workers.
- 8.3 Unarguably, staff retention is equally as important as attracting the right number of qualified social workers to the right roles at the right time. Hence, HR is working with managers to

improve the retention rate. For example, there is a 'No Quit Policy' aimed at persuading quality staff from leaving the Council. Some of the push factors such as caseloads, motivation etc are being addressed. Better exit data and feedback from leavers is being analysed and shared with management to improve the retention rate.

- 8.4 Additionally, on the job support is being developed including coaching and mentoring support for qualified social workers to improve their motivation and quality of practice/decision-making. Ultimately, all qualified staff in the service at every level, from the Director to frontline staff will have a Career Development Plan, based on the nationally agreed competencies clustered around the following:
- Value-based competencies i.e. what is our vision for children and young people in the Borough?
  - Leadership competencies i.e. ability to lead and manager.
  - Functional/operational competencies i.e. the non-negotiable core skills for individual roles.
- 8.5 In summary, the recruitment and retention of qualified staff remains a real challenge but HR is working well with Children's Social Care managers and employment agencies to improve the recruitment and retention rates.

<b>Non-Applicable Sections:</b>	[List non-applicable sections here]
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	OFSTED INSPECTION OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES 14 <sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2016