

Report No.  
ED18020

London Borough of Bromley

PART ONE - PUBLIC

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**Decision Maker:** EDUCATION, CHILDREN AND FAMILIES BUDGET AND PERFORMANCE MONITORING SUB-COMMITTEE

**Date:** Tuesday 26 September 2017

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

**Title:** CHILDREN'S SERVICE IMPROVEMENT UPDATE

**Contact Officer:** Janet Bailey, Interim Director: Children's Social Care  
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**Chief Officer:** Interim Director: Children's Social Care (ECHS)

**Ward:** (All Wards);

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1. Reason for report

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the progress of the Children's Service Improvement Plan.

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2. **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

**Members of the Education, Children and Families Budget and Performance Monitoring Sub-Committee are invited to comment on the contents of this report.**

### Impact on Vulnerable Adults and Children

1. Summary of Impact: Summary of Impact: The full content of this report impacts on the needs of vulnerable children and the required actions necessary to improve the services delivered.
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### 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:
  4. Total current budget for this head: £
  5. Source of funding:
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### Personnel

1. Number of staff (current and additional):
  2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours:
- 

### Legal

1. Legal Requirement: Statutory Requirement:
  2. Call-in: Not Applicable:
- 

### Procurement

1. Summary of Procurement Implications:
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### Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected): Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected): Approx 300 CLA, 230 subject to a child protection plan and 2000 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 Background

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 inspection report published on 27 June 2016 found that the service was '*Inadequate*' in all judgement areas and that the Bromley Safeguarding Children Board (BSCB) '*Requires Improvement*'.

##### Children's Commissioner

In June 2016 the Secretary of State under the provisions of Section 497 A appointed Frankie Sulke CBE as a Children's Commissioner to assess and make recommendations on how to improve children's services in Bromley. The Commissioner worked alongside children's services colleagues and partner agencies to complete her assessment. The [report](#) which recommended that a DfE Commissioner undertake a further six months scrutiny of the service was shared with Ministers in September 2016. Frankie was then appointed again for a further six months to complete her assessment of the service. In May 2017 Frankie submitted her final report with recommendations to Ministers. This report which was published on 12 September 2017 made a strong case for the council to continue to run Children's services rather than a transfer to an external trust. The Children's Commissioners final report can be viewed [here](#). The Department for Education responded to the Children's Commissioners report and issued a new [direction](#) to the Council on 12 September 2017.

##### Ofsted Monitoring Visits

Authorities judged as 'inadequate' across all judgement areas are subject to further inspection and monitoring activity from Ofsted. To date, inspectors have carried out four monitoring visits of Bromley's Children's Services. The first was on Tuesday 8 and Wednesday 9 November 2016, the second took place on Wednesday 22 and Thursday 23 February 2017 and the third was on Tuesday 9 and Wednesday 10 May 2017.

The most recent monitoring visit took place on Tuesday 8 and Wednesday 9 August 2017. Feedback from this visit was published on Friday 8 September 2017, see monitoring visit feedback [letter](#).

The service is now currently working towards the next monitoring visit which will take place on Monday 30 and Tuesday 31 October 2017.

##### National Social Care Director Visit

On Wednesday 6 September 2017, the service hosted Eleanor Schooling CBE, the National Social Care Director. Although this visit was not part of the statutory inspection process, Eleanor used the time to meet with Senior Managers and Elected Members to discuss the progress of improvements being made in the service.

#### 3.2 Progress made against Children's Services Improvement Plan

The Children's Services Improvement Plan which was developed in conjunction with partner agencies was submitted to Ofsted in September 2016. The plan which has 10 priorities covers the 23 Ofsted report recommendations with 306 actions.

For the period covering 1 May 2016 to 31 August 2017 a total of 298 actions were due to be completed which is 97% of all actions outlined in the plan.

As at 31 August there are a total of 23 actions (8%) RAG rated 'Red', 142 actions (48%) RAG rated 'Amber' and 133 actions (44%) RAG rated 'Green'. The 23 actions (8%) RAG rated 'Red'

are highlighted in the monthly 'Exemption report' due to be discussed at the next Children's Services Improvement Governance Board (CSIGB) on Friday 22 September 2017.

Three priorities out of the 10 have no RAG rated 'Red' actions – (priority 2- *Management oversight and quality assurance*, priority 3 - *Bromley Children Safeguarding Board* and priority 10 - *Legal services*). The priority with the highest number of RAG rated 'Red' actions is *priority 5 – Children Looked After* with 9 actions.

### **3.3 Key Achievements May 2016 – August 2017**

The service has introduced a range of improvements following the Ofsted inspection in April 2016 these include those listed below.

#### Leadership and Management

In November 2016, the CSIGB appointed an independent Chair Isobel Cattermole – a freelance consultant with wide experience in Adult and Children's Social Care to take over the leadership of the group. Monthly meetings include regular focus and scrutiny on practice improvement and performance related issues.

In December 2016, the council appointed a permanent Deputy Chief Executive & Executive Director of Education Care and Health and Interim Director of Children's Social Care to lead on the improvement agenda.

In January 2017, Jim Gamble QPM was appointed to the role of Independent Chairman of Bromley's Safeguarding Children Board. Jim was awarded the Queen's Police Medal for distinguished service in a former role and is currently independent chair of the City and Hackney Safeguarding Children Boards. The City of London under Jim's leadership, is the first and only Local Safeguarding Children Board to be judged outstanding by Ofsted.

Member's responsibilities have been realigned so that the Portfolio holder for Education also holds responsibility for Children's Services.

A comprehensive training and development programme for members has been developed, circulated and commenced. The contact details of the Children's Social Care senior management team has been circulated to members for ease of access.

The Council commissioned an experienced external consultant from the Local Government Information Unit to undertake member development training to support them in their role. The consultant has observed a Care Services PDS and reported back initial observations from this. A training and support package and dates are being developed for the autumn.

Following the outcome of the inspection, recruitment and retention of quality and experienced staff was recognised as a priority for the department. The Executive demonstrated its commitment to this by approving the drawdown of additional funding to support the implementation of the improvement plan and the service set up a Recruitment and Retention Board to focus on this area of work.

Extra capacity within the Children's Social Care senior management team has been created in order to provide clear lines of responsibility, accountability and oversight. When Ofsted inspected the service in May 2016 there were 4 Heads of Service reporting to the Director for Children's Social Care which has now increased to 7 (excluding a time limited project manager post). 6 out of 7 of these appointments are permanent.

Funding has also been used to realign the current departmental structure and recruit additional 'Team Manager' posts. These posts have been created to identify additional management capacity with the skills and experience to support practitioners within the department.

In November 2016, the service introduced additional capacity to the Referral and Assessment Service by realigning the FAST Team as a fifth Referral and Assessment Duty Team to help improve the operational functionality of front door work. A second Group Manager and sixth RAS team was introduced from February 2017.

Two specialist teams have been created (Court Team in September 2016) and (Atlas Team in January 2017) in order to ensure that the service has dedicated, experienced and skilled resources available to respond to care proceedings cases and where children are at risk of child sexual exploitation and/or missing.

The service held its first Corporate Parenting Fun Day on Sunday 30 July. The event aimed at creating a sense of a Corporate Family, gave children and young people and foster carers an informal opportunity to meet officers, managers and elected members. The event was very well attended and good feedback was received about the day.

### Quality Improvement Framework

The Quality Improvement Team introduced a robust monthly auditing schedule in September 2016, with the first audits completed in October 2016. This activity continues to be well supported across the service with feedback and learning from all audit activity regularly disseminated. The monthly audit and improvement programme also includes a number of thematic ‘deep dive’ audits covering specific areas agreed by the Director of Children’s Social Care.

In December 2016, three Practice Consultants commenced a programme of audits of live cases to quality assure decision making in real time, provide feedback to front line staff and to facilitate continuous improvement and learning. The process called ‘Triple lock’ is a systemic approach which supports line managers in good decision-making, whether this is dealing with children in need, child protection or children looked after. This process does not replace the existing line management responsibilities and decision making points rather working in parallel with current processes. Auditors have been monitoring themes, and have been co-ordinating benchmarking of practice which they feedback.

The BSCB recruited an external auditor to undertake a short programme of multi-agency audits. The first focussed on neglect and the second audit on Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE).

In April 2017 the Quality Improvement service held its first practice development week for members of the senior management team, including the Chief Executive, Leader and Portfolio Holder. This included 33 activities and observational opportunities including *Review Child Protection Conferences*, LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) *Strategy Meetings*, *CLA (Child Looked After) Review*, *Child in Need Meeting*, *CSE MAP (Multi Agency Planning) Meeting*, *Team-Based Discussions and Live Audits*. The feedback from those who attended has been very positive and a second practice week has been scheduled for 9 – 12 October 2017.

### Scrutiny and challenge around practice

The service has set up a number of Panels at key decision making points to provide further overview and scrutiny of practice. These include:

<i>Placement Panel</i>	to facilitate discussion and approval of placements and funding arrangements within Children’s Social Care (CSC) and with partner agencies
<i>Public Law Outline</i>	sets out what should happen before care proceedings are issued
<i>Legal Gateway Panel</i>	is responsible for hearing all new cases and providing management oversight and scrutiny of all cases where a Legal Planning Meeting has been requested by CSC

<i>Pre-Proceedings Tracking Meeting</i>	to ensure that all cases in pre-proceedings are monitored and that all the assessments and other agreed tasks on the cases are progressing to the agreed deadlines
<i>Early Permanency Panel</i>	focuses on children and young people entering care in Bromley to scrutinise care plans and to ensure that all aspects of care arrangements, permanency and contingency plans are in place
<i>Care Leavers' Placement Panel</i>	is responsible for ensuring care leavers are in suitable accommodation, have the appropriate level of support and clear transition plans into adulthood
<i>Long Term Fostering Permanency Surgery</i>	reviews and tracks permanency plans for all young people who are not yet matched and secured in long term fostering placements
<i>Child in Need Panel</i>	focuses on cases that have been subject to Child in Need for over nine months, whether the plan is purposeful or if the case should be stepped up, down or closed
<i>Transfer Panel</i>	case transfer meetings focus on ensuring the effective and efficient transfer of cases between Bromley Children Services

In February 2017, the service introduced a series of quarterly seminars entitled 'Getting to Good'. The seminars are open to all practitioners, managers and group managers from across all service areas and highlight learning from auditing and practice improvement.

The service has reviewed and simplified the Escalation process which is regularly monitored and reviewed by Senior Managers at SMT and performance data is included in the monthly Risk Management Matrix. Cases that are not resolved within agreed timescales are referred to the Director of Children's Social Care for resolution.

The service has recruited a specialist Children in Need (CIN) chair to independently review CIN cases. The purpose of this role is to make sure that all CIN get the right help at the right time to reach their full potential.

#### Partnership working

Since taking up the role in Bromley in January 2017, the Independent Chair has reconfigured the structure and sub groups of the Board to ensure that the constitution, terms of reference and set of standards are appropriately set up to enable critical enquiry and challenge. As part of this reconfiguration, the previous CSE/Missing/Gangs working group has become a formal sub group of the BSCB and is called the Vulnerable Adolescents Sub Group (VASG). Terms of Reference have been agreed and is chaired by Deputy Borough Commander, Trevor Lawry. The VASG coordinates and ensures the effectiveness of the partnership's strategic response to adolescent vulnerability and has a primary focus on ensuring robust and effective arrangements are in place for the following three priority areas of risk: CSE; Children missing from home, care and education and; children and young people exposed to risk through gang involvement or association.

Work continues to take place in progressing the Housing action plan with updates being provided to CSIGB on 20 January 2017 and 26 May 2017.

In January 2017 the service launched a programme of three Multi Agency Partnership Events designed to provide partner agencies with information and advice to support their work to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the children and young people in Bromley. The events run as a set of three sessions through the year and cover: -

- Event 1 - Understanding Safeguarding; it's everybody's business!
- Event 2 - Emerging Issues; Who's in the lead?
- Event 3 - Aspirations for all our children and young people; Especially the vulnerable

A Leaving Care Hub has been set up at Downham Youth Centre offering young people the option of where they want to access help, support and training in life skills including holding tenancies and managing finances. The hub is a 'one-stop-shop' for multi-agency partners to support our care leaving population.

The Children's Executive Partnership has been set up and held its inaugural meeting in March 2017. The partnership whose membership includes the police, schools, health, parents and carers and the voluntary sector will be monitoring and reviewing the Children and Young People plan which is currently being developed.

#### Support to the existing workforce

In December 2016, the Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director Education, Care and Health Services organised a series of sessions to launch the Communication Roadmap 'Line of Sight', 'Training Programme', 'Practice Standards' and 'Caseload Promise'.

Frontline staff are also encouraged to attend the monthly 'Listening to you sessions in order to ascertain views from all staff. The Interim Director of Children's Social Care holds monthly 'Tell me' sessions to enable staff to discuss any issues or concerns regarding the service in an informal manner. In addition the Deputy Chief Executive & Executive Director of Education, Care and Health and Interim Director of Children's Social Care both under take regular 'floor walking' in all areas of the service so they are visible and accessible to staff. A staff survey is scheduled to take place in September to gather further intelligence.

Email updates from the Chief Executive and Senior Management continue to inform members of staff about key changes and developments within the service including the ongoing monthly ECHS Staff Surgery.

A comprehensive Practice Development Plan commenced in January 2017 for members of staff including mandatory training modules. The Practice Development Plan is reviewed quarterly.

The Threshold document has been reviewed, updated and launched by the Bromley Safeguarding Board.

The service continues to progress work streams to support the implementation of the new IT management system Eclipse scheduled in October 2017.

The Quality Improvement Service commissioned an external consultant to review the effectiveness of Independent Reviewing Officers, Child Protection Chairs and Signs of Safety within the organisation. The final report and recommendations were discussed at CSC Senior Management Team on 7 September 2017. A supporting action plan is being finalised before being shared with the Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director, Education, Care & Health Services and Interim Director for Children's Social Care.

All social workers have access to a laptop to facilitate mobile working arrangements. This has enabled staff to access and update records following visits rather than needing to return to the office to access IT which is a less efficient way of working.

Feedback from staff consultation and engagement sessions to the Deputy Chief Executive & Executive Director of Education, Care and Health identified concerns over confusing salary bandings across the division. From 1 April 2017 the Recruitment and Retention Board

implemented a 'pay equalization' scheme giving staff clarity on minimum and maximum pay and retention bonuses in salary bands based on the grade that people are employed as.

In January 2017 the Deputy Chief Executive & Executive Director of Education, Care and Health set up the Social Work Practice Development Group, a group of frontline practitioners who act as an advisory function on a wide range of professional practice developments; and whose members act as the champions of quality outcome-focused practice in Bromley. This group which meets monthly and has a forward work plan. which has included the compilation of the Resource Directory (a central reference guide outlining all the Council's services which support vulnerable children and their families), assisting with defining the progression pathway for social workers and launching a 'Break Out' resource room for practitioners.

In June 2017 the service formally launched the reviewed and updated Career Progression Pathway for Social Workers which demonstrates how the service values staff and wants to recognise and support those with the skills and expertise required to shape the service.

Following a review and revision of the London Borough of Bromley Children's Social Care processes and procedures, the new Procedure Manual has been developed in collaboration with Tri.x and will be formally launched on Monday 17 July 2017. To compliment this the services internal sharepoint pages are being reviewed and updated to reflect what practitioners need to see to help them in their role.

### **3.4 Areas for further development over the next six months**

Work streams that will be prioritised over the coming months include:

- Development of the Children and Young People's plan in conjunction with partner agencies.
- Independent assurance test of the DCS role including the 'line of sight' framework.
- Recruit a Principal Social Worker.
- Undertake a service review of Children and Family Centres.
- Review children's commissioning contracts to assess the effectiveness of the help and support provided, and that they are delivering against the key objectives.
- Review support given to children and young people who are NEET and develop tailored action plans.
- Respond to the external consultant's review of IRO/CPC service and implement recommendations.
- Review areas where there are service gaps following outcome of Adoption Diagnostic.
- Review the outcome of the Market Testing exercise for the Fostering service and implementing recommendations.
- Development of Care Leavers Local Offer.
- Full implement of Eclipse IT system.
- Recruit permanent members of staff to facilitate with the delivery of the caseload promise.

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

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**

All actions within the 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 though:

- 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.

## 6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

On the 12 September 2017, the Secretary of State under section 497A(4B) of the Education Act 1996 Act issued the following direction to the Council.

- To comply with any instructions issued by the Department for Education on behalf of the Secretary of State in respect of the improvement of children’s social care functions;
- To ensure that the independent Chair of the Council’s Improvement Board reports in writing to the Secretary of State at quarterly intervals on the progress being made in securing improvements to the discharge of children’s social care functions, and provides any information which the Secretary of State requests, with the first such report to be provided by 01/10/2017.
- To ensure that the Deputy Chief Executive of the Council’s focus is directed exclusively towards improved delivery of children’s social care functions until agreed otherwise by the Secretary of State.

<b>Non-Applicable Sections:</b>	Financial, Personnel and Procurement Implications.
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	