

## BARNSELY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

This matter is not a key decision within the Council's definition and has not been included in the relevant Forward Plan

Report of the Executive Director (People)  
to Cabinet

(12<sup>th</sup> July 2017)

### REVIEW OF THE BARNSELY PLEDGE TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN CARE

#### 1.0 **Purpose of This Report**

1.1 To inform Cabinet of the progress, development and promotion of the Barnsley 'Pledge' to children and young people in care and care leavers.

#### 2.0 **Recommendation**

2.1 **That the progress made against the desired Outcomes within the Council's 'Pledge' to children in care and care leavers, is noted.**

2.2 **Cabinet recommends that this report be referred to a future meeting of Full Council, as part of renewing its commitment, as the Corporate Parent, to the values and principles within the 'Pledge'**

#### 3.0 **Background**

3.1 The Barnsley Pledge to the Children and Young People in Care (*please see Appendix 1*) was created in partnership with the Care4Us Council. It was approved for adoption by Cabinet, at its meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2016.

3.2 Since then, the Care4Us Council continues to meet to ensure young people in care and care leavers have their views heard on the decisions that affect their lives. The Pledge is reviewed annually and is now part of the Children's Services Continuous Improvement Plan, involving children and young people in care being consulted and contributing to the review and services providing evidence of implementing the Pledge.

3.3 The Pledge is a key strategy within the People Directorate Business Unit 3, Children's Social Care and Safeguarding Business Plan 2017/2018.

#### 4.0 **Barnsley Pledge to Children and Young People in Care – Performance**

4.1 The following examples demonstrate how we have responded to the challenges laid out within the six 'Outcomes' of the Pledge. Figures used within this report are the annual figures for 2016/17<sup>1</sup>, where available.

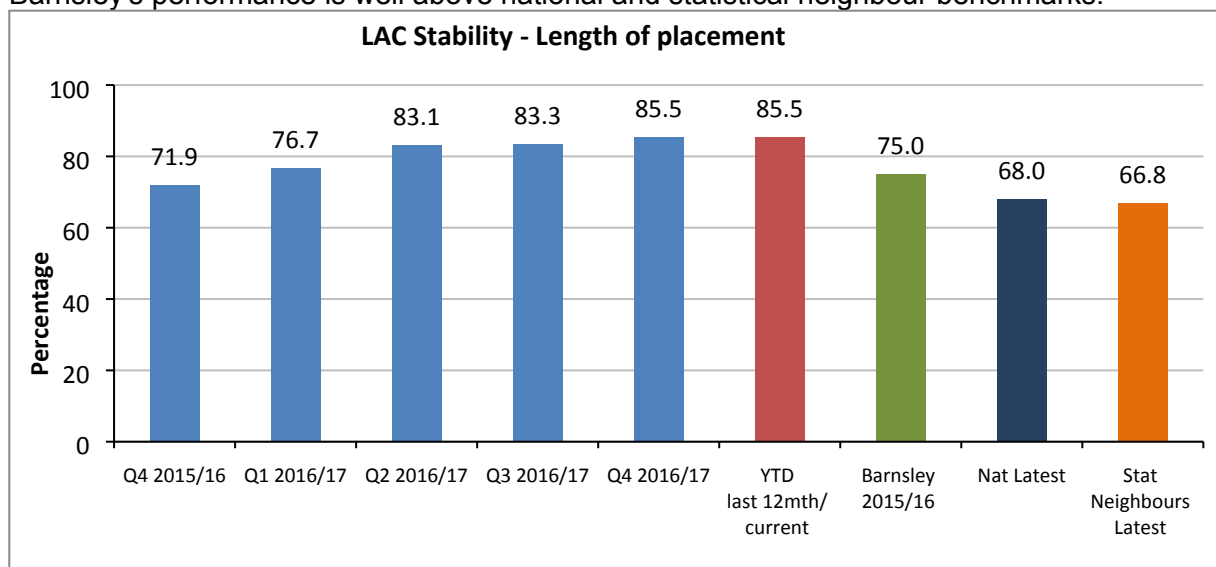
##### Outcome 1 - We'll look after you in a safe and caring home

- The percentage of children in care reviewed within timescale is 96.6% which is comparable to the 96.9% reported for Barnsley in the 2015/16 statutory return.
- Children in Care being visited within timescale reached 91.4% as a 12 month average, but had improved to 93.1% in March.

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<sup>1</sup> Year ending 31 March 2017.

- The percentage of children with 3+ placement moves remains low at 2.7%. At the end of March, there were 8 looked after young people who have had 3 or more placement moves since entering care.
- The percentage of those looked after children who are in the same placements for 2yrs+ increased by more than 10 percentage points to 85.5% at the end of 2016/17<sup>2</sup>. Indeed, Barnsley's performance is well above national and statistical neighbour benchmarks.



- All of the twenty young people currently placed in Children's Homes reside in Ofsted-rated 'good' or 'outstanding' placement provision.
- The number of reported missing from care episodes increased to 267 at the end of 2016/17, having been 212 at the end of 2015/16. In March, there were 20 episodes, relating to 10 individuals (2 of whom accounted for four episodes each). It is important to note that, in the majority of cases, the whereabouts of these children are actually known.
- The Placement Sufficiency Oversight and Resource Panel (PSORP) has been created to provide an increased scrutiny of placements of Children in Care. The panel has close links with the Virtual School to ensure that education attendance is considered when making placement decisions.
- Robust safer recruitment and arrangements for the management of allegations against people who care for or work with children are in place.

### Outcome 2 - We'll promote and support and respect your identity

- Children's Social Care and Safeguarding Services aim to place children in care with carers within the borough. Local placements provide continuity for the children and ensure that they are cared for within a familiar and known environment. It also enables children to retain their cultural identities, social relationships and family attachments as much as possible. Equally, placing children within the borough ensures that services delivered by key partner agencies, such as health and education, are more consistent due to close partnership working.
- As of 31 March 2017, there were 291 Children in Care<sup>3</sup>; most (85.9%) placed in Barnsley or in neighbouring authorities. Our local performance remains above the national (74.7%) and statistical neighbours' (84.3%) averages.
- The number of Barnsley looked after children placed outside the Borough at year-end was 93, compared to 99 the previous year. Just 24 were placed further than twenty miles away.

<sup>2</sup> Performance at the end of 2015/16 was 75.0%.

<sup>3</sup> This figure fluctuated roughly between 280 and 300 in any calendar month during the 2016/17 reporting period.

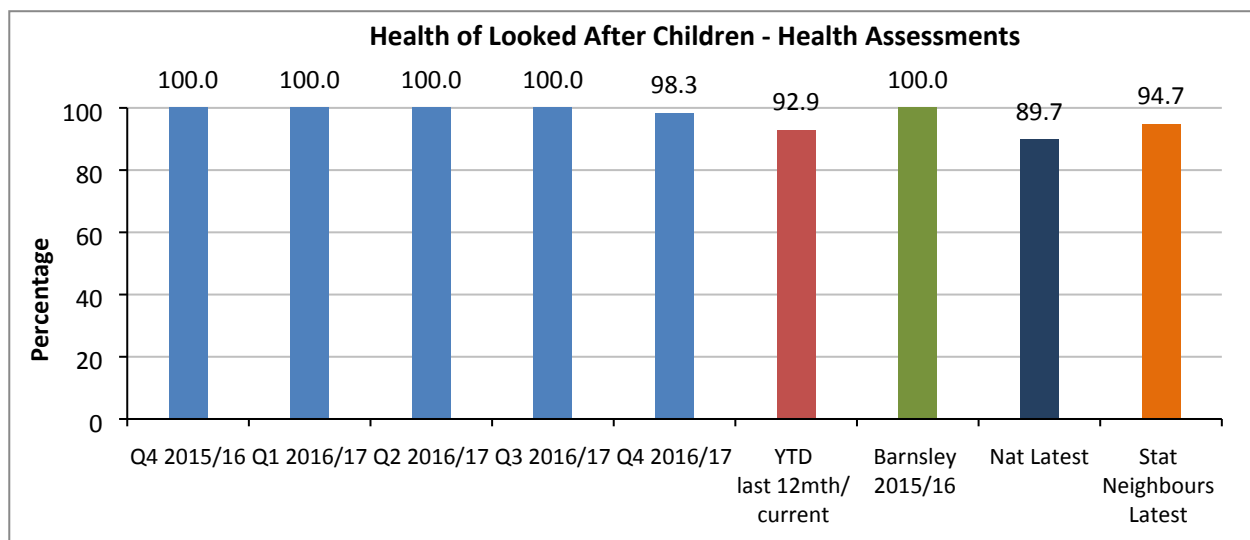
- To support our children in care obtain an understanding of their life story, we currently have 177 Life Story Books within the Children in Care team all at various stages of completion. We have completed 63 Life Story Books this year.

Outcome 3 - We'll ensure you receive a good outcome

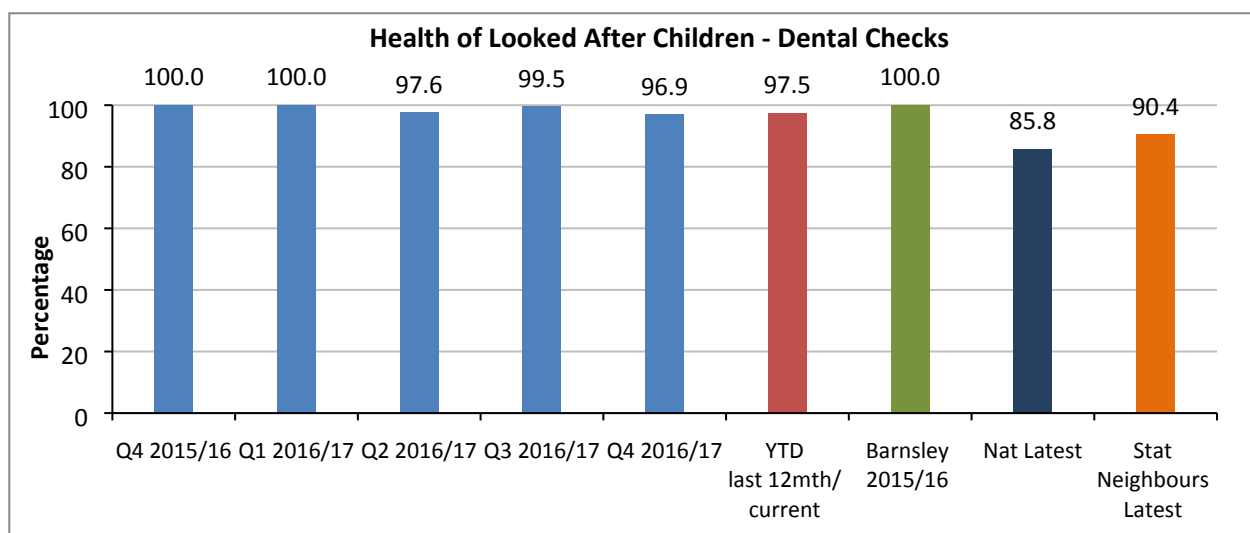
- 88.3% of Children in Care are placed in 'Good' or 'Outstanding' Ofsted-rated Schools.
- All children in the care of BMBC are supported to fulfil their educational potential through high quality personal education planning. The newly introduced termly personal education planning procedures (TPEPs) ensure that the education plans for each child are monitored closely and linked to effective use of any Children in Care Pupil Premium funding (additional funding granted by the government to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils of all abilities).
- A review of PEPs / TPEPs recently undertaken found that compliance is good (95%+).
- Designated teachers in Barnsley schools receive regular training and professional development through the designated teacher network.
- Through termly data collections, the Virtual School monitors the attendance, exclusions and achievement of all its children. The attendance data is not available at the time of writing, but will be included in the next report.
- The annual Children in Care Awards continue to promote and celebrate the achievement of our Children in Care. The 2016 Awards received 261 nominations for 178 young people. 87 young people attended the event with 25 nominated guests; 65 Foster carers; 20 Social workers; 20 VIPS and 16 other staff making a grand total of 233 in the room.

Outcome 4 - We'll support you to be healthy

- The proportion of health assessments for looked after children completed on time dipped to 92.9% year-ending March 2017. This indicator is usually subject to a time lag due to recording and notification issues. Performance figures for April 2017 (97.9%) suggest that improvements are being made against this indicator.



- 97.5% of children looked after for 12 months or more had a dental check year-ending March 2017. Barnsley remains above the most recent national and statistical neighbour comparators for both of these indicators.



- Audit shows we are good at ensuring children and young people are given opportunity to be seen alone for their health assessment and that the majority of health assessments take place at home so education is not disrupted and they are not singled out from their peers.
- Strengths Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQs) for emotional health and wellbeing are completed at 3 months after entering care as a baseline and then each year after that to inform the health assessment the recognition of emotional health and wellbeing and to support referral to specialist services.
- Joint working with CAMHs to provide Children in Care weekly consultation clinics has reduced waiting times to within 6 weeks. A revised 'Children in Care CAMHs Pathway' will be launched in June 2017 which will highlight an enhanced support and consultation service.
- The Children in Care Jogging Club has commenced again in April and will carry on until the clocks go back later this year. They are hoping to partake in this year's Park Run Event at Locke Park.

#### Outcome 5 - We'll prepare you for the future

- The Children's Commissioner National Takeover Challenge promotes participation, is in line with Barnsley's Pledge to Children and helps prepare young people into the world of future employment. Barnsley's involvement during 2016 in the Takeover Challenge was to:
  - Put our children in care and care leavers into decision-making positions;
  - Provide opportunities for our organisations and businesses to hear their views;
  - Allow young people to gain an insight into our working world; and
  - Inspire our young people by their experiences.
- Barnsley achieved a Gold Commendation from the Children's Commissioner for work carried out for the Takeover Challenge in November 2016.
- Suitable Accommodation for Care Leavers in April was 97.6%. This was because 2 care leavers were in custody.
- The number of young people on Staying Put arrangements has increased to 15.
- Over the last 12 months the proportion of our 18, 19, and 20 year-old care leavers engaged in education, training or employment (EET) has remained fairly constant throughout the year; currently running at around 45%. This remains below our target of 65%. We also remain under target for employment opportunities for adults with learning disabilities.
- We have refined our management and oversight Education, Training and Employment (ETE) for Care Leavers.

## The numbers of Care leavers in ETE in May 2017

	18	19	20	Total
Total	21	18	26	65
Number in ETE	8	9	11	28
Percentage	38%	50%	42%	43%

This is a priority improvement area for us in 2017.

- There are currently 7 Care Leavers in higher education.
- We currently have 4 Care Leavers who have taken up apprenticeships.
- Although Contact for children is arranged on an individual need basis, contact is key to promoting children's future needs. Maintaining contact and community links is encouraged, we know that children often return to their birth families and we want to ensure that they have the relationship skills and resilience to manage this more positively once they have left our care
- The newly created termly personal education planning procedures (TPEPs) ensure that the education plans for each child plans their journey into adulthood with a close focus on their educational, employment and training requirements.
- Young people are involved in their own Needs Assessment which informs their Pathway Planning which in turn prepare and supports young people into adulthood.

### Outcome 6 - We'll involve you in making it happen

- The Care 4 Us Council continues to develop. An annual development plan / work programme has been created to allow a clear sense of direction for the Council members.
- During 2017 the Care 4 Us Council will receive reports from internal and external services on how they are supporting the Pledge.
- A Care 4 Us Council Marketing and Communication plan has been created to support the greater awareness of the Council and the Pledge.
  - The development of a monthly Care 4 Us Newsletter which will be made available to all children in care and care leavers.
  - Development of Poster / Leaflets to promote the Care4Us Council / Pledge
  - Development of a Care4Us Council website to ensure that other young people in care are aware what the Council is doing and the Pledge.
- A key action has been the setting up of a Social Workers / Training "what matters to children and young people" survey.
  - Creation of the "top" ten issues of importance to children and young people in care and care leavers.
  - Development of a training package for social workers of the "top 10" issues of importance to children and young people in care and care leavers.
- The Care 4 Us Council is to receive a presentation and report on June 14<sup>th</sup> 2017 from the Children in Care service in response to the Council's work regarding the "top 10 issues" which they want their social workers to understand. Areas for discussion include:
  - Coming into Care,
  - Looked After Reviews,
  - Family Contact,
  - Consistent service response,
- It is intended to create and launch a training package for all social workers and foster carers "what matters to children and young people. The Pledge will be an integral part of this training package.
- These findings and the proposed training package will be presented to the Social Care Development Forum on July 28<sup>th</sup> 2017.
- Independent Visitors are provided to Children in Care who request this service. Currently we have 32 young people being supported in this way.

#### 4.2 Promoting the Pledge

4.3 To support the Barnsley Pledge with the aim of further ensuring it is incorporated within all aspects of our service delivery for Barnsley's children in care and care leavers the following oversight and connections have been instigated over the past 12 months:

4.4 Posters of the Pledge have been distributed across services within the People Directorate Business Unit 3. All staff have signed their support to the Pledge and it is regularly discussed within team meetings and in individual supervision.

4.5 The Business Unit 3 Continuous Service Improvement Plan (CSIP) has been updated and now includes a specific Barnsley Pledge section to ensure that the impact and influence of the Pledge within strategic policy and decision making is understood and monitored. This oversight will place great emphasis on interaction with children in care and care leavers and monitor that they are regularly consulted on how to improve the support that they receive.

4.6 Within the Barnsley Pledge section of the CSIP one of the key monthly actions is to report findings from any review or test of the Pledge to Corporate Parenting and Care 4 Us Council.

4.7 The CSIP actions are discussed at the monthly Business Unit 3 Performance Group meetings to ensure that the Pledge objectives are monitored at the same time as the Service Performance reports. This new initiative will be further expanded within the actions during 2017/2018.

4.8 Additional actions are to be incorporated during 2017/2018 to support the Barnsley Pledge to the Children and Young People in Care. These actions have been incorporated to enhance the awareness of the Pledge and to enable an increased understanding, and therefore reporting of how Services and Partners are supporting the Pledge.

4.9 This year's Team Objectives (work plan) for services within Business Unit 3 incorporate and include references to the Pledge within the Delivery Plan, objectives and Team actions.

4.10 Social Care Development Forum - Children's Social Care Excellence Awards. The awards nominations are to be cross referenced with the Pledge objectives to celebrate staff achievements and the promotion of the Pledge.

4.11 An additional Barnsley Pledge section to be incorporated into the Corporate Parenting panel report template. All reports will be required to state the impact and connection to the Pledge's 6 objectives.

- We'll look after you in a safe and caring home,
- We'll promote and support and respect your identity,
- We'll ensure you receive a good outcome,
- We'll support you to be healthy,
- We'll prepare you for the future,
- We'll involve you in making it happen.

4.12 The Development of a Barnsley Local Offer for Care Leavers – DfE Keep on Caring Supporting Young People from Care to Independence, July 2016.

- 4.13 All the above actions will further improve our ability to meet the challenges set out within the Barnsley Pledge to children and young people in care.

## **5.0 Proposal and Justification**

- 5.1 The progress made against the six outcomes in the 'Pledge' demonstrates the Council's commitment to improving the potential and life chances of children in care and care leavers. This will be reinforced through adherence to the provisions in the Children and Social Work Act (2017) concerning functions in relation to looked after children and care leavers up to the age of 25 which local authorities must have regard to.
- 5.2 Our Pledge to children in care and care leavers accords with the Council's corporate priority of people being able to achieve their potential through improving their wellbeing. Ensuring children in care and care leavers are able to attend a good school and receive targeted support remain key strategic objectives of the Barnsley Children and Young People's Plan.
- 5.3 The 'Pledge' also supports the Council's commitment towards improving the health of children in care and care leavers, upon which performance in relation to receiving regular health and dental assessments, continues to be stable.
- 5.4 In order to maintain progress and standards of performance against the outcomes in the 'Pledge' the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Service will, at every review, ensure that a child in care has a current copy of the Pledge and evaluate how the child feels his or her social worker are delivering the ambitions of the Pledge as part of the check and challenge process.

## **6.0 Implications For Local People and Service Users**

- 6.1 Ensuring progress against the outcomes in the Pledge will enable children in care and care leavers across all communities in the Borough to thrive in the knowledge that they are able to maintain good health, remain safe, improve their educational achievement and participate in a growing local economy.

## **7.0 Financial Implications**

- 7.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.
- 7.2 The resources for delivering outcomes against the Pledge form part of the budget / funding within the Children Social Care and Safeguarding Business Unit. The budgeted spend by Children Social Care for 2017/18 is £24M, of which £16M (67%) relates to spend on Children in Care and Leaving Care services (mainly in relation to placement costs). The funding for 2017/18 includes additional investment of £2.9M to cover increased cost of children in care placements.

## **8.0 Employee Implications**

- 8.1 There are no direct employee implications arising through this report.

## **9.0 Communications Implications**

- 9.1 Every child who newly enters care will receive a copy of the Pledge. The document will continue to be reviewed annually and children and young people in care will continue to be consulted and contribute to the review. A copy of our Pledge is placed on the Council's Website, following every review and is accessible to a range of stakeholders.

## **10.0 Consultations**

10.1 The 'Pledge' is developed and refined, following each review, through extensive consultation with children and young people in care and care leavers; senior managers and staff across the local authority, health and Third Sector services, together with elected members on the Corporate Parenting Panel and the Council's Senior Management Team.

## **11.0 The Corporate Plan and the Council's Performance Management Framework**

11.1 Please see Paragraphs 5.2 – 5.3.

## **12.0 Promoting Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**

12.1 One of the outcomes sought through the 'Pledge' is to "*Promote, support and respect (a child or young person's) identity*". This is a commitment to ensuring the Council identifies, understands and meets the specific needs of children in care and care leavers that relate to disability, gender, culture, religious belief and sexual orientation.

## **13.0 Tackling the Impact of Poverty**

13.1 The number of children in care engaged in education, employment and training, stood at 43% as at May 2017. This is below our local target of 65% but with the measures, currently in place, we hope to improve the number of young people in care who are participative in education, employment or training, including accessing higher education, as part of improving their potential and life chances and of shielding them from the effects of deprivation.

## **14.0 Tackling Health Inequalities**

14.1 By April, this year, the percentage of children in care, in Barnsley, who were receiving regular health and dental assessments each stood at 98% and this was above both the Regional and National Average. This is an encouraging outlook as we strive to continually close the gap between the health and wellbeing of children in care and their peers.

## **15.0 Reduction Of Crime And Disorder**

15.1 The commitment towards keeping children safe in a caring home; to foster their aspirations and to improve their physical and emotional wellbeing, through the 'Pledge' can make a crucial contribution towards diverting them from risky and harmful behaviour that can not only impact on them but also upon their communities.

## **16.0 Risk Management**

16.1 There are no unanticipated risks emerging through consideration of this report.

## **17.0 Health, Safety and Emergency Resilience**

17.1 There are no implications arising through this report.

## **18.0 Compatibility with the European Convention on Human Rights**

18.1 The Council's commitment to improving the life chances of children and young people in care and care leavers, through the 'Pledge' accords with the Articles and Protocols of the Convention, particularly in promoting the right of a child to be safeguarded from harm.



**19.0 Conservation Of Biodiversity**

19.1 There are no implications for the local environment or the conservation of biodiversity in this report.

**20.0 Glossary Of Terms And Abbreviations**

20.1 Not applicable.

**21.0 List Of Appendices**

21.1. Appendix 1: 'The Barnsley Pledge To Children And Young People In Care'

**22.0 Details Of Background Papers**

22.1 Background papers used in the production of this report are available to view by contacting the Children's Social Care and Safeguarding Service, People Directorate, Barnsley MBC, PO Box 634, Barnsley, South Yorkshire, S70 9GG

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Financial Implications/Consultation  
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*(to be signed by senior financial services officer where no financial implications)*