

## 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 Chief Executive  
to Cabinet

6 September 2017

### **ARRANGEMENTS FOR DISCHARGING THE STATUTORY ROLE OF DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES: LOCAL TEST OF ASSURANCE**

#### **1.0 Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 To inform Cabinet of the outcomes of a peer led test of assurance, concerning the Borough's arrangements for complying with the statutory guidance on the roles and responsibilities of the Director of Children's Services (DCS).

#### **2.0 Recommendations**

- 2.1 Cabinet is recommended to note the findings and recommendations, emerging through the Test of Assurance, as summarised within Paragraphs 4.2 and 5.2 of the report.**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

- 3.1 In April 2013, updated statutory guidance on the roles and responsibilities of the DCS and LMCS, as defined under Sections 18 (7) and 19 (2) respectively of the Children Act (2004) was published.
- 3.2 Two years later, through the Authority's "*Future Council*" Programme, the senior management posts of Executive Director (Adults and Communities) and Executive Director (Children, Young People and Families) were combined into the single post of Executive Director (People) and the former Executive Director (Children, Young People and Families) was appointed to the new post.
- 3.3 Within "*Future Council*" the Executive Director (People) has assumed responsibility for the statutory roles of Director of Adult Social Services and DCS.
- 3.4 In view of this and, mindful, that the above, statutory guidance encourages local authorities to review their organisational arrangements as part of ensuring they best accord with the continuing role and responsibilities of the DCS, without any diminution, a local test of assurance was recently undertaken.
- 3.5 The peer conducting the test of assurance was the Corporate Director of Children and Young People's Services, at North Yorkshire County Council. This Service is one of eight which has been accredited by the DfE as a 'Partner in Practice' and is, therefore, funded to provide sector led improvement to other children's services

authorities. In addition, the Service was judged by Ofsted as 'Good' in its most recent inspection, in 2014.

### 3.6 Scope And Methodology Of The Local Test Of Assurance

3.7 The Test of Assurance focused upon the following factors, concerning the discharging of the range of services for children and young people, in Barnsley:

- Leadership, governance and accountability
- Management capacity and workforce development
- Performance management and quality assurance
- Stakeholder and service user engagement
- Multi agency and partnership arrangements
- Child protection arrangements

3.8 The Test was based on the following elements of assessment:

- Interviews, including with the Leader and Chief Executive of the Council; Cabinet Spokespersons (People) and co-LMCS; the Chairs of the Barnsley Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) and Overview and Scrutiny Committee; Chief Superintendent (South Yorkshire Police); Accountable Officer (Barnsley CCG) together with a focus group comprising of social work practitioners and team managers.
- A review of documentary evidence, including key policies, plans and strategies; performance data; schemes of delegation and the minutes of meetings.

3.9 The findings and recommendations of the Test are detailed in the Appendix to this report.

## 4.0 Summary Of Outcomes

### 4.1 Findings

4.2 The Test of Assurance has yielded the following findings:

#### Leadership, Governance And Accountability

- High levels of confidence in the leadership and ability of the Executive Director (People) to support continuing improvement in the range of outcomes for children and young people in Barnsley.
- Strong commitment by the Leader and Chief Executive of the Council, together with Lead Members and the Chair of the LSCB, to children's services.
- Good evidence of Lead Members and senior management, listening to the front line.
- High quality overview and scrutiny of services for children and young people.
- An impressive and coherent children's services improvement framework and (action) plan.

### Management Capacity And Workforce Development

- A very lean senior leadership structure in children's services but which, nonetheless, contains experienced and talented senior leaders with strong lines of support, particularly from quality Heads of Service and performance management.
- Good management oversight and supervision, particularly from senior leaders in children's services.

### Performance Management And Quality Assurance

- Clear evidence of leadership and management awareness of the performance of services against indicators and targets, including listening to the front line, and of action being instigated to improve or maintain performance both within the Council and at multi agency level, particularly via the challenge provided to partners.
- The Council's Scheme of Delegations of Authority facilitates better and speedier decision making.

### Engaging Stakeholders And Service Users

- Extensive evidence of good practice in listening and acting upon feedback, including through current bodies and initiatives as well as the DCS's willingness to be directly involved in key local discussions, concerning children's services and to instigate evidence based best practice, through sector led, peer improvement.

### Multi Agency And Partnership Arrangements

- The DCS has played an important part in the effectiveness of local partnership working. Partners are challenged and at the same time, nurtured into making a consistent and valuable contribution to improving outcomes for children both within core partnership bodies and individually. This has led to good practice in area based working and in the delegation and sharing of resources.

### Child Protection Arrangements

- Arrangements continue to be improved and good practice embedded, based upon excellent leadership, leadership capacity and collaborative partnership working.
- Strategic alignment of the early help offer to adults, children and young people, with the local, stronger communities agenda, appears to work.
- Good evidence of multi agency, front line 'buy-in' and understanding of local thresholds for intervention, which has been enhanced through the integration and co-location of services.
- One result of these ongoing improvements in provision is a reduction in the number of children requiring a child protection plan.

## **5.0 Proposal And Justification**

- 5.1 The local Test of Assurance has concluded that the statutory duties and responsibilities of the DCS, together with local arrangements concerning (i) accountability and (ii) effective partnership and inter agency working, are all being effectively met in Barnsley.
- 5.2 Two, non binding, recommendations are highlighted in the Test of Assurance Report. These are:
- Barnsley MBC needs to ensure that moving forward, its generic scrutiny arrangements do not develop targeted work plans which reduce the focus and quality in the scrutiny of children and young people services.
  - A recognition that structural arrangements for the leadership and management of children's services, in Barnsley, are currently dependent on high calibre individuals fulfilling key roles and that the lean or streamlined structure needs to ensure excellent succession planning and, whenever, necessary, strong recruitment arrangements.
- 5.3 The second of these recommendations will be incorporated within the Organisational Development and Workforce element of the Borough Children's Services Improvement Framework and Action Plan.

## **6.0 Consideration of Alternative Approaches**

- 6.1 In this instance, such consideration is not applicable as the purpose of the report has been to inform Cabinet of the outcome of the local Test of Assurance.

## **7.0 Implications for Local People and Service Users**

- 7.1 There are no direct implications for local people or service users, emerging through consideration of this report. The outcomes of the Test provide assurance to local communities and other stakeholders, that the statutory role and responsibilities of the DCS, as defined in the Children Act (2004) and subsequent statutory guidance, is being effectively met.

## **8.0 Financial Implications**

- 8.1 There are no financial implications directly arising through the Test of Assurance. Its costs have been met through the DfE's 'Partner in Practice' programme.

## **9.0 Employee Implications**

- 9.1 Cabinet's attention is drawn to one of the two recommendations highlighted in the Test of Assurance which is set out in Paragraphs 5.2 (bullet point 2) and 5.3 of this report.

## **10.0 Communications Implications**

- 10.1 There are no communications implications directly arising through consideration of the report and Test.

## **11.0 Consultations**

11.1 In conducting the local Test of Assurance, an important element of the methodology and evaluation of compliance, were the direct interviews which took place with a number of stakeholders, as summarised in Paragraph 3.8.

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

12.1 The outcomes of the Test provide assurance over the effectiveness of local arrangements aimed at ensuring the following priorities in the Corporate Plan:

- Every child attends a good school and is successful in learning and work.
- Children (and adults) are safe from harm,

together with the Vision and Strategic Priorities of the Barnsley Children and Young People's Plan (2016-19) and one of the Strategic Priorities of the Barnsley Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2016-20) namely 'Children starting life being healthy and staying healthy'.

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

13.1 The scope and methodology of the Test of Assurance focuses upon the quality and effectiveness of both universal and targeted provision, including meeting specific needs. In terms of ensuring equality, the final report makes no recommendation or comment, including with reference to the Council's Equality Priority of improving the educational attainment of children for whom English is not the primary language, upon which good progress continues to be made.

## **14.0 Tackling the Impact of Poverty**

14.1 The Test of Assurance comments favourably on the quality of the early help 'offer' to children, young people and families. Support which enables children and young people to get off to a good start or to receive the help and protection needed to achieve their potential, will give them a better chance to acquire the skills needed to access employment and financial inclusion.

## **15.0 Tackling Health Inequalities**

15.1 Whilst no specific reference is made, the Test explicitly reflects the high levels of confidence in the ability of the DCS to continue improvements in the range of outcomes, including health, together with the good level of understanding among front line practitioners of multi agency procedures, which has benefited through the integration and co-location of services.

## **16.0 Reduction of Crime and Disorder**

16.1 As with Paragraph 15.1.

## **17.0 Risk Management Issues**

17.1 There are no risks associated with consideration of this report or in the outcomes of the Test of Assurance.

**18.0 Health, Safety and Emergency Resilience Issues**

18.1 There are no implications for health, safety and emergency resilience, in the report.

**19.0 Compatibility with the European Convention on Human Rights**

19.1 No implications, concerning the Articles and Protocols of the Convention, have arisen through the Test of Assurance.

**20.0 Conservation of Biodiversity**

20.1 There are no implications for the local environment or the conservation of biodiversity, in the report.

**21.0 Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations**

21.1 None, applicable.

**22.0 List of Appendices**

22.1 Appendix: Barnsley MBC, Test of Assurance – Arrangements for Discharging Director of Children’s Services Functions (July 2017)

**23.0 Details of Background Papers**

23.1 Background papers used in the compilation of this report are available to view by contacting the People Directorate, Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council PO Box 634, Barnsley, South Yorkshire S70 9GG

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Financial Implications/
Consultation ..... <i>(to be signed by senior Financial Services Officer where no financial implications</i>