

The Continuous Service Improvement of Children's Social Care and Safeguarding Services

1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an overview and update to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) on the progress of the continuous service improvement in Children's Social Care and Safeguarding Services since 2012 to date.
- 1.2 The report should be considered together with the following documents which include: the continuous service improvement chronology of events (Appendix 1); the recommendations and actions following both the 2012 (Appendix 2) and 2014 inspections (Appendix 3); the Continuous Service Improvement Plan 2017 Aspirations (Appendix 4); and the Continuous Service Improvement Framework (Appendix 5).
- 1.3 In summary, the actions highlighted in the 2012 and 2014 Ofsted inspections are now complete as processes have been in place to address them. Services are now working towards the 2017 Aspirations identified in Appendix 4 and service improvement continues to be managed on a monthly basis via the Continuous Service Improvement Plan.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) are responsible for the inspection and regulation of services that care for children and young people, and services providing education and skills for learners of all ages. Although they report directly to Parliament, they are independent and impartial.
- 2.2 In 2012 Barnsley Children's Social Care Services were inspected and judged by Ofsted to be inadequate for child protection services and adequate for looked after children services. Ofsted set out a number of actions for improvement in their inspection report. Consequently on 28th November 2012, an 'Improvement Notice' was issued to the Council by the then Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families, who is the Minister responsible for children and families within the Government Department for Education (DfE). The Improvement Notice required the Council to set up an improvement board to monitor and drive improvement and appoint an independent board chair.
- 2.3 An Improvement Board was set up and a Service Improvement Plan was developed. The Service Improvement Plan was mapped against the Ofsted inspection actions and requirements. **See Appendix 2.**
- 2.4 Six monthly progress reports against the Improvement Notice were submitted by the Independent Chair to the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Children and Families). The six monthly progress reports reported on:
 - Summary of progress
 - Issues to address in the next period
 - Risks in the next period
 - Overall conclusions and judgment
- 2.5 During the period of the Improvement Notice regular reviews were undertaken by the DfE Improvements and Interventions Unit, who also sat on the Improvement Board.
- 2.6 In June 2014 a full Ofsted Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers and a review of the effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board was undertaken over a 4 week period. Ofsted judged the authority as 'requiring improvement'. This judgement means that, "*there are no widespread or serious failures that create*

or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of looked after children is safeguarded and promoted. Minimum requirements are in place, however, the authority is not yet delivering good protection, help and care for children, young people and families". The experiences and progress of care leavers was found to be 'good'.

- 2.7 In 2014, Ofsted did not identify any child requiring immediate priority action. Ofsted reported on the accelerated progress upon the present Director of Children's Services (DCS), Rachel Dickinson, being appointed in June 2013. Ofsted reported on strong leadership and governance; that Managers knew their services well, but that planned improvement actions were still in progress and it was too early to evidence the impact of some improvements made. In addition, there was one area for improvement that was identified within the previous inspection in 2012 that still had to be addressed (Appendix 2) which was to improve timely access to files for Care Leavers.
- 2.8 The Continuous Service Improvement Plan was subsequently reviewed and mapped against the actions arising from the 2014 Ofsted Inspection, (with the exception of the one 2012 action), as well as locally set targets. **See Appendix 3.**
- 2.9 A DfE review undertaken on the 17 December 2014 concluded that, 'Barnsley had made good progress since the last review and that the workforce continues to be engaged and motivated by the improvement journey and by a strong leadership team. The Council is clearly committed to see Barnsley improve and recognises not only its current position but more importantly, what is necessary to drive Barnsley forward to where it wants to be'.
- 2.10 Subsequently the Improvement Notice was lifted. This led to the governance for service improvement transitioning from the Improvement Board to Barnsley Safeguarding Children Board (BSCB) as well as the Barnsley Children and Young People's Trust. The Barnsley Children and Young People's Trust is the local partnership that brings together organisations responsible for providing services for children, young people and families in the borough such as the Council, NHS organisations, Education establishments and the Police.
- 2.11 In April 2015, the DfE reviewed the progress that was being made and concluded that improvements were sustained with no let-up in the pace!

3.0 Current Arrangements

- 3.1 The Continuous Service Improvement Framework is reviewed annually, with the last review undertaken on the 18th November 2016 at the Barnsley Children and Young People's Trust and BSCB Joint Development Day. At this last event, it was agreed that the actions from the 2014 Ofsted inspection had been addressed. The Service Improvement Plan was again refreshed by the multi-agency Officer Group, setting more aspirational targets for children and young people. **See Appendix 4.**
- 3.2 The Continuous Service Improvement Plan is routinely presented to the BSCB in order that progress can be reviewed and actions taken to tackle insufficient progress or poor performance where necessary. Issues which have commissioning implications will be reported to the Barnsley Children and Young People's Trust for consideration.
- 3.3 The Continuous Services Improvement Plan is driven by a multi-agency Officer Group, now chaired by the Service Director for Children's Social Care and Safeguarding. In developing the Plan and ensuring it fulfils its purpose following recent Ofsted inspections, regular consultation has taken place with partner agencies, professionals and practitioners involved in providing services to vulnerable children, as part of informing best practice.
- 3.4 The Continuous Service Improvement Framework and Plan has driven real improved progress for vulnerable children in Barnsley, as evidenced in the monthly performance information and data, which tracks performance and progress against key national and local performance indicators, as routinely presented to the OSC in private session.
- 3.5 Member led challenge is a key element of the Continuous Service Improvement Framework. The Service Director for Children's Social Care presents every month to the Lead Member for

Safeguarding the Children's Social Care monthly performance report, which is also presented to the bi-monthly OSC meeting held in private session. The Corporate Parenting Panel oversees performance specifically relating to children in care.

3.6 As a means of checking the quality of services that sit beneath quantitative performance data, the Executive Director for People and the Lead Member for Safeguarding, together with the Service Director for Children's Social Care every month meet with frontline social work teams and go out with practitioners to directly observe practice with children and families. This is in addition to a programme of single and multi-agency case file auditing.

3.7 Additionally, one of the strategic objectives of the Plan is to improve the skills of and quality of practice within the children's social care workforce across all sectors. On this, the Director of Human Resources, Performance, Partnerships and Communications is supporting the Barnsley Children and Young People's Trust in the formulation and development of a social care workforce development plan.

4.0 Invited Witnesses

4.1 The following witnesses have been invited to today's meeting and will give a short presentation on the improvement journey from a child's perspective as well as answer any questions:

- Rachel Dickinson, Executive Director – People, BMBC
- Keeley Boud, Social Work Team Manager, BMBC
- Andrew Veal, Social Work Team Manager, BMBC
- Antonia Williams, Social Worker, BMBC
- Steve Guirey, Social Worker, BMBC
- Alice Darby, Social Worker, BMBC
- Cllr Margaret Bruff, Cabinet Spokesperson – People Directorate, BMBC

5.0 List of Appendices

1. Continuous Service Improvement Chronology of Events
2. Recommendations and Actions Following 2012 Ofsted Inspection
3. Ofsted Recommendations and Actions Following 2014 Ofsted Inspection
4. Continuous Service Improvement Plan 2017 Aspirations
5. Continuous Service Improvement Framework

6.0 Background Papers & Links

- Barnsley Children and Young People's Trust Website:
<https://www.barnsley.gov.uk/services/children-families-and-education/children-young-people-and-families-trust/>
- Barnsley Safeguarding Children Board (BSCB) Website:
<https://www.barnsley.gov.uk/services/children-families-and-education/safeguarding-families-in-barnsley/safeguarding-children-in-barnsley/worried-about-a-child/>

7.0 Glossary

BMBC – Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council

BSCB – Barnsley Safeguarding Children Board

DCS – Director of Children's Services

DfE – Department for Education

Ofsted – Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills

OSC – Overview and Scrutiny Committee

8.0 Officer Contact

- Anna Marshall, Scrutiny Officer, Tel: 01226 775794
- Mel John-Ross, Service Director for Children's Social Care & Safeguarding,
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19th September 2017

Appendix 1

Continuous Service Improvement (CSI) Chronology 2012 – 2017

Jun 2012	- Ofsted Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children Services
Aug 2012	- Ofsted report of findings with a judgement of 'Inadequate'
Sep 2012	- Interim Director of Children's Services (DCS) appointed and in post
Oct 2012	- Independent Chair of Improvement Board appointed by Department for Education (DfE) - Improvement Board established with a meeting monthly - Internal Officer Group established with a meeting weekly Chaired by interim DCS
Nov 2012	- Notice of Improvement Issued by DfE
Jan 2013	- Independent Chair's 2 month progress report
Jun 2013	- Appointment of Rachel Dickinson as DCS (Appointed in March – took up post June) - DfE 6 month review – including Independent Chair's 6 month progress report
Dec 2013	- DfE 12 month review - including Independent Chair's 12 month progress report
Apr/May 2014	- The Continuous Service Improvement Plan was expanded to followed the child's journey rather than limiting it to only Ofsted recommendation from 2012
Jun 2014	- Ofsted Inspection of Services for Children in Need of Help and Protection, Children Looked After and Care Leavers
Aug 2014	- Ofsted Report of findings with a judgement of 'Requires Improvement'
Oct 2014	- The Continuous Service Improvement Framework was established - DfE 18 Month Review - including Independent Chair's 18 month progress report (this was delayed due to Ofsted's Inspection in June 2014)
Nov 2014	- DfE lift the Notice to Improve - Improvement Board disestablished; governance for the CSI Framework & Plan transferred to Barnsley Safeguarding Children Board (BSCB) - Internal Officer Group meetings frequency changed to fortnightly
Apr 2015	- DfE Review following lifting of the Notice - Internal Officer Group meetings frequency changed to monthly - Continuous Service Improvement Plan monitored on a monthly basis by the Multi-Agency Officer Group continues to date, reporting to every BSCB meeting
Oct 2015	- Children's Services Sector Led Peer Challenge Review of Early Help - Review of the Continuous Service Improvement Framework and Plan at the Annual Joint Children and Young People's Trust / BSCB Event
Nov 2016	- Review of the Continuous Service Improvement Framework and Plan at the Annual Joint Children and Young People's Trust / BSCB Event
April 2017	- Children's Services Sector Led Peer Challenge Review of Children Missing Education

Appendix 2 – Recommendations and Actions Following 2012 Ofsted Inspection

1. Ofsted Recommendations
Ensure that managers provide robust oversight of safeguarding practice and that their case planning, directions, decisions, case discussions and staff supervision are promptly and routinely recorded
Ensure that child protection investigations are carried out in accordance with the BSCB Joint Investigation Protocol 2011
Ensure that referrers receive feedback on the outcome of referrals that they make to social care services
Ensure that child protection conference chairs are enabled to assess the effectiveness of safeguarding practice through child protection conferences and that any issues are regularly reported to the BSCB
NHS Barnsley PCT and its partners to review strategic and operational links with primary care health providers, with specific regard to the engagement of primary health in the delivery of services through well-being centres, and strengthening links with health visitors to improve risk assessment, early intervention and prevention
Barnsley Hospital NHS Foundation Trust (BHNFT) to review the arrangements in the emergency department for responding to children and young people presenting with deliberate self-harm or who are intoxicated, and develop appropriate systems with robust monitoring and quality assurance systems
Barnsley Hospital NHS Foundation Trust (BHNFT) to review arrangements for quality assurance of safeguarding training and practice across adult and paediatric emergency departments, and take appropriate action to strengthen systems
Ensure that agencies have a clear understanding of thresholds for access to social care services
Ensure that intervention and services are promptly provided to meet the assessed needs of children
Ensure that child protection plans are consistently specific and measurable and that plans are regularly reviewed and developed at core group meetings
Ensure that there is sufficient capacity within the social care service emergency duty team to meet needs and enable children to receive a timely response
Ensure that robust performance management of safeguarding services is undertaken across the partnership and that audits of practice are routinely undertaken and reported to the BSCB
Improve the timeliness and quality of intervention in pre-birth planning protocols
Ensure that reports to child protection conferences are timely and of good quality

Ensure that referrals from children’s social care services into the CAF and referrals from the CAF to social care are appropriately made where it is in the child’s interests
Ensure that elected members and the BSCB robustly scrutinise core child protection processes and data
Ensure that the voluntary sector is actively engaged in strategic and operational planning of safeguarding services
Create a plan which will ensure that looked after children’s health needs are met
Ensure that looked after children’s health assessments and dental checks are timely and appropriately carried out
Ensure that sufficient suitable accommodation is available to meet the needs of care leavers
Ensure that sufficient education, employment and training opportunities are available to care leavers
NHS Barnsley PCT to take action to ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place to meet the health needs of looked after children in compliance with the statutory guidance “Promoting Health and Well Being for Looked After Children”; to include review of the capacity and role of the designated and named professionals for looked after children, and the development of robust arrangements for ensuring the strategic oversight and performance management of the looked after children’s health team
Ensure that a robust range of data is routinely collated and analysed in relation to looked after children to inform service planning and development
Ensure that elected members are enabled to actively engage in the scrutiny of performance of services for looked after children
2. Notice Recommendations (Improvement Notice) from the Department for Education (DfE)
Ensure IROs are able to fulfil their role in accordance with the IRO handbook
Develop and implement a risk assessment framework that will inform the development of a child protection and children in need plans to ensure consistent judgements are made about the level of risk (Para 5.3)
Ensure the council communicates and embeds their vision and ambition for children’s social care services and that staff and council partners are aware of their roles and responsibilities in delivering this vision and ambition of the council. (para 6.1)
Undertake a review of the effectiveness of partnership working, particularly BSCB with a view to agreeing with the council’s partner’s actions to address any issues concerning partnership working. The implementation of those actions and the impact on improving the working relationship of the council and their partners will be monitored by the improvement board. This should include ensuring the voluntary sector is actively engaged in strategic and operational planning. (para 6.2)

Embed the leadership team across children services, securing transition arrangements for changes in key posts and personnel (para 7.2)

The Council should report the impact the training has on improving outcomes for children to the Improvement Board. Attention must be paid to the eight standards for employers of social workers. (Para 7.3)

Ensure that the views of staff are considered in relation to their work and workplace using feedback mechanisms, such as staff surveys, the result of which should be reported to the Improvement Board. To support this, consideration should be given to the Children's Safeguarding Performance Information Framework (published 12 June 2012). (Para 7.5)

3. Additional Local Actions

Test the implementation and effectiveness of Young Carers Action Plan

Implement upgraded system to record incidents of bullying in Schools and process for returning to Council

Rectify problems with privacy and confidentiality in child protection conference venues

Embed practice of referencing and understanding of culture, ethnicity and religion in assessments and conferences

Monitor the process of engaging young people in the effectiveness of health services

Improve access to files for Care Leavers to meet 40 day target

Review attendance and contribution to Reviews including engagement with Schools (includes OFIN 7a and OFIN 7b)

Test and evidence timeliness of processing Foster Carers applications and assessments through performance management arrangements. Annual report to the Corporate Parenting Group or by exception

Test and evidence that children can easily access the complaints process and that the outcomes from complaints/compliments are effectively used to improve service delivery

Appendix 3 - Ofsted Recommendations and Actions Following 2014 Ofsted Inspection

Ensure that thresholds between early help and statutory Children in Need and Child Protection are appropriate, understood and operate effectively. Children receive the correct intervention identified by a thorough and timely assessment of their needs. Ensure help is provided as early as possible through co-ordinated multi-agency arrangements and seamless interface between Early Intervention and Prevention and statutory social care provision
Further improve the quality and recording of assessments, action, planning and decision making
Ensure that children and young people are demonstrably listened to and heard and that their views can be seen to influence the social work practice in their case, this includes a wider engagement with families
Access to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)
Ensure a focus on vulnerable groups in quality assurance service development and planning
Improve safeguarding services for children with disabilities and complex health needs
To develop services to vulnerable children with SEN via the development and implementation of the requirements of the Children and Families Act
The use of the Public Law Outline (PLO) to underpin authoritative practice
Children and young people in care are demonstrably listened to and heard. Their views can be seen to influence the social work practice in their case
Develop the range and choices of available placements and ensure placement stability
Improve the timeliness and quality of health assessments (including those placed out of authority)
Improve educational outcomes for CiC (including those placed out of authority)
Recruitment, preparation, prompt assessment and training of a wide range of potential adopters including those needed to meet the needs of 'hard to place' children
Timeliness of matching and placement of children with prospective adopters

Adoption support is available and meets the needs of those who require it
Improve range of safe, supported accommodation available for care leavers (including 'Staying Put')
Access to education, employment and training
Access to CAMHS and Health Provision for Care Leavers
Ensure care leavers have effective pathway plans which address life skills and risk taking behaviour by providing support as needed. This to include transition to adult services where appropriate
Ensuring that senior managers and political leaders have a comprehensive and robust knowledge about what is happening at the 'front line' and challenge accordingly. Develop and implement a robust QA learning and improvement function
Further strengthen the role and function of the Corporate Parenting Group (CPG)
Workforce Development
Further strengthen the role and function of the BSCB

Appendix 4 – Continuous Service Improvement Plan 2017 Aspirations and Plans

Children, young people and families are offered help when needs and/or concerns are first identified and, as a consequence of the early help offered, children's circumstances improve and, in some cases, the need for targeted services is lessened or avoided
The interface between Early Help and Children's Social Care work is clearly and effectively differentiated with the needs of the children, young person and their families being met in a timely way and families are supported to sustain the gains they have made following statutory support and intervention
Children and young people in need of help and protection are identified by all professionals, inc. adult services, and appropriate referrals are made to Children's Social Care. Response to referrals should be effective and timely with expertise and advice available including out of normal office hours
All children/young people who need help and protection have an assessment (inc. Early Help) that is timely, proportionate and informed by research, historical context and significant events for each case
Information sharing between agencies and professionals is timely, specific and effective, and takes into account the requirements and guidance about the need to obtain parental consent
All children/young people (Early Help/Child in Need/Child Protection/Children in Care) will have a SMAART plan that is understandable and clearly responds to the child's needs and identifies the help that will be offered to the family along with the necessary changes to be achieved within the child's timeframe
Decision making is undertaken by suitably qualified and experienced social workers/managers and all decisions, actions and engagement with children, families and other professionals is clearly recorded
All children/young people who live in households where parenting capacity is reduced due to domestic abuse, substance misuse &/or mental ill health are helped and protected and multi-agency responses are effective and coordinated
All children and young people who live in households where there is neglect and abuse are helped and protected, and the incidents are monitored and the multi-agency responses are effective and coordinated
All help and protection for children/young people is sensitive and responsive to age, disability, ethnicity, faith or belief, gender, gender identity, language, race and sexual orientation
All children and young people who are at risk of CSE or missing from home, care or education receive coordinated responses that reduce the harm
Child and Adolescent Mental Health (CAMHS) provision, timely therapeutic help and services are available when they are needed and for as long as they are required
Children and young people have good emotional health and wellbeing (EWB) or are being helped to improve their EWB and their EWB needs are identified and support is provided in a timely way
All young people on the edge of care have their needs identified and responded by a multi-agency approach in a timely manner
Children achieve timely permanency through the timely conclusion of Public Law care proceedings

All children and young people, inc. children in care and with a disability, are listened to and heard, and professional practice is focused on their needs/experiences and is influenced by their wishes and feelings (or where applicable advocated on their behalf)
Children/young people are consistently seen alone by their social worker and understand what is happening to them, with professionals/carers developing positive/meaningful relationships and are committed to protecting them and promoting their welfare
All requests made by young people in care/care leavers for access to records/life history are provided within in a timely manner and in a clear and understandable format
The impact and influence of the voice of the child on strategic policy and decision making is evidenced by the Care4Us Council and they are regularly consulted on how to improve the support they receive
Children and young people in care attend a good school or other educational provision; they learn and make good progress. They receive the same support from their carers as they would from a good parent. The attainment gap between them and their peers is narrowing
The local authority and partners identify all children/young people who are privately fostered and ensure that they are safe and that their health and wellbeing are properly promoted
All approved foster families are safe, well supported and sufficient in number to care for children and young people with a with range of needs and enables children to be placed with their siblings and have contact with their birth family/friends when in their best interest
All children/young people in care, including those placed out of authority, are in good health, or have had their health needs identified and have timely access to health support for dental, physical and emotional wellbeing issues
All children and young people who have a plan for adoption will be effectively prepared for, and carefully matched with a permanent placement in a timely way without delays or unnecessary moves with effective life history work being provided when they need it
Pathway planning is effective address all young people's needs and are updates as circumstances change
All care leavers have access to a suitable range of safe and supported accommodation that best meets their needs, and where at risk of tenancy breakdown alternative plans are in place
All care leavers have access to appropriate education and employment opportunities (inc. apprenticeships/work experience) and are progressing well and achieve their full potential through life choices, and are encouraged and supported to continue their education and training
All children/young people with a disability and/or complex health have their needs addressed and timely services are provided
All case records are clear, accurate and reflect the work undertaken with children, and clearly relate to plans for their futures
All social workers should have consistent and timely reflective supervision and appraisal which offers high support and challenge
BSCB can provide evidence that it coordinates the work of statutory partners in helping, protecting and caring for children in its local area and there are mechanisms in place to monitor the effectiveness of those local arrangements inc. the constructive challenge between partners

Multi-agency safeguarding training in the protection and care of children is effective and evaluated regularly for impact on management and practice

BSCB checks that policies and procedures in respect of thresholds for intervention are understood and operate effectively and identifies where there are areas for improvement

Challenge of practice between partners and casework auditing are rigorous and used to identify where improvements can be made in front-line performance and management oversight

BSCB provides robust and rigorous evaluation and analysis of local performance that influence and inform the planning and delivery of high-quality services

Operate a robust business planning and outcomes focused approach to the work of the BSCB and routinely use feedback from children, young people and their families to evaluate its impact as well as service provision

Ensure the Communications Strategy supports the evidencing of the BSCB's impact and facilitates closer engagement with front line workers

Appendix 5

Barnsley Continuous Service Improvement Framework

