

BARNSELY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT OF: THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (CHILDREN'S SERVICES)

TITLE: INSPECTION OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES CHILDREN'S SERVICES: OUTCOMES OF THE JOINT, TARGETED AREA INSPECTION OF THE MULTI-AGENCY RESPONSE TO THE IDENTIFICATION OF INITIAL NEED AND RISK AMONG VULNERABLE CHILDREN IN BARNSELY

REPORT TO:	CABINET
Date of Meeting	21 SEPTEMBER 2022
Cabinet Member Portfolio	CHILDREN'S SERVICES
Key Decision	No
Public or Private	Public

Purpose of report

To inform Cabinet of the outcomes of the recent Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) of the multi-agency response to the identification of initial need and risk among vulnerable children in Barnsley, together with the next steps.

Council Plan priority

The JTAI and its outcomes primarily support the priority of a **Healthy Barnsley** within the Council Plan, by ensuring young people are effectively safeguarded from harm, together with the priority of a **Learning Barnsley** through enabling young people to have access to effective early help and support.

Recommendations

- 1. That the outcomes of the JTAI, together with the next steps, be recommended for consideration by Full Council.**
- 2. That the draft 'Written Statement of Proposed Action' in response to these outcomes be presented for Cabinet's approval at the meeting on 19th October 2022, with this date subject to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee waiving its right to 'call-in' the Statement, if required (*Please see Paragraph 2.9 of this report*)**

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Together with focused inspections and the *Annual Conversation* between the Regional Director (Ofsted) and the Director of Children's Services, the JTAI forms part of the framework for the inspection of local authority children's services (ILACS)

1.2 The Borough's JTAI took place between 23rd and 27th May this year and was undertaken by a combination of inspectors from the following inspectorates:

- Care Quality Commission
- Her Majesty's Inspectorate of (Police) Constabularies and Fire and Rescue Services
- Ofsted

1.3 Scope and Methodology of the JTAI

1.4 The scope of the JTAI included an evaluation of the following:

- How effectively individual agencies in a local area identify and respond to contacts and referrals concerning initial need and risk among vulnerable children in need of help or protection
- The effectiveness of the local multi-agency safeguarding hub or MASH
- How effectively each local partner contributes to the multi-agency response, including early decision-making across early help, children in need of help and child protection
- How effectively the local statutory partners for safeguarding or the Barnsley Local Safeguarding Children Partnership monitor, promote, co-ordinate and evaluate their work.
- The impact of leaders and managers upon the quality of practice and provision with children and families through the '*front door*' to children's social care
- The timeliness of this work and the impact of the local area's actions in improving the multi-agency response to children in need of help and protection
- How well current practice takes account of the relevant history in children's cases.

1.5 The methodology for conducting the JTAI included the following:

Pre-inspection activity

Each inspectorate shared an analysis of relevant information they held about the local area. An inspector from each of the inspectorates reviewed the information and then met to discuss arrangements for the inspection before local partners, including the Council were notified of the JTAI.

Week 1

- Inspectors requested information from the local partners to support the inspection

- Inspectors and local leaders held a set-up discussion which took place off site.
- Local agencies shared with each other, the information to support the inspection.
- Inspectors selected a cohort of children as the basis for evaluating their experiences and journey
- Inspectors concluded their planning and pre-inspection analysis for the JTAI.

Week 2

- The local area audited children's experiences.
- Local agencies in the Barnsley LSCP shared information with inspectors to support the inspection.
- Inspectors carried out pre-inspection analysis and reviewed the information set out in Annex 'A'. of the guidance for conducting JTAs
- Inspectors worked with the local agencies to agree a fieldwork timetable.
- Inspectors met virtually with local leaders, staff and stakeholders, together with observing practice. These interviews included the Interim Executive Director (Children's Services) the Independent Scrutineer of local area arrangements for safeguarding children; Head of Public Protection, together with the Force's lead for multi-agency safeguarding arrangements (South Yorkshire Police) and the Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Children (*formerly Barnsley Clinical Commissioning Group and now the South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board*)

Week 3

- Inspectors carried out fieldwork as part of gathering evidence for the inspection
- Identification of any emerging issues of concern and recording evidence
- The findings of the Inspection were communicated to the Barnsley LSCP's Board at the end of Week 3

2. PROPOSAL

2.1 The JTAI culminated in the publication of the inspectorates' findings in the letter attached as the Appendix to this report.

2.2 Outcomes of the JTAI

2.3 The JTAI's headline findings were that:

"Most children in Barnsley receive the right support at the right time to identify risk and meet their needs across the 'front door' services. The recently formed Barnsley Local Safeguarding Children Partnership demonstrates ambition and commitment to improve outcomes for children and their families. However, it is too early to evidence consistent progress to improve services for all children"

2.4 Many aspects of provision were commended in the report, including the following:

- The commitment of local partners to working together to improve outcomes for children
- The quality of the multi-agency training offer to practitioners
- The quality of early help offered
- Tackling child protection concerns
- The quality of child and family assessments
- The multi-agency response to children missing from home
- The effectiveness of both single and multi-agency audits in building upon the quality of practice.

2.5 However, the following areas of provision were identified as in need of improvement

- The quality and consistency of all agencies' in gathering, recording and responding to the expressed wishes and feelings of children with whom they work.
- The quality of referrals to the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH), including the timeliness of those from general practitioners (GPs).
- The timeliness of the local authority sharing information with partner agencies, including the outcome of referrals and the minutes of child protection strategy meetings.
- The consistent application of thresholds for children stepping down to early help services.
- The provision of an appropriate adult when children are arrested by the police.
- The timeliness of the police response to all incidents when there is an identified risk to children.
- The availability of and the quality of the Emergency Duty Team's (EDT) response to children and partner agencies.

2.6 The detailed findings of the JTAI are outlined in the joint inspectorates' letter (*Please see Appendix*)

2.7 Next Steps

- 2.8 As a result, the JTAI has concluded that as the principal authority, Barnsley MBC, together with its local statutory partners in the Barnsley LSCP should compile a *Written Statement of Proposed Action* outlining how the local partners will appropriately own and respond to the findings in the JTAI's report via an action plan to be overseen by the Barnsley LSCP Board.
- 2.9 This Statement must be forwarded to the joint inspectorates by 25th October 2022 for consideration and approval. Therefore, with Cabinet's agreement, it is recommended that the proposed Written Statement be presented for Cabinet's consideration and approval at the meeting on 19th October prior to its submission to Ofsted.
- 2.10 Unlike the culmination of standard inspections of local authority children's services no judgement has been given to the JTAI and no additional intervention is contemplated.

3 IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

3.1 Financial and Risk

- 3.2 Consultation has taken place with representatives of the Service Director Finance (S151 Officer).
- 3.3 Whilst the requirement to submit a *Written Statement of Proposed Action* in isolation will not create any additional cost pressure, the actions highlighted within it may well do. With this in mind senior finance officers will work closely with colleagues within Children's Social care to determine any ongoing cost implications for the Council and report back to Cabinet and Full Council in due course.

3.4 Legal

- 3.5 The JTAI letter did not expressly indicate any non-compliance with the Council's statutory responsibilities for meeting the needs of children in need of help or protection, together with children in need of care.

3.6 Equality

- 3.7 There were no implications for promoting equality or eliminating unlawful discrimination expressly emerging through the JTAI.

3.8 Sustainability

- 3.9 There are no implications for sustainability in the Borough arising through consideration of this report.

3.10 Employee

- 3.11 The JTAI letter commends the quality of the overall multi-agency programme of training and development for professionals and practitioners. However, the JTAI has identified specific instances where the quality of practice is variable among the multi-agency partners. This will be addressed through the 'Written Statement of Proposed Action' and the multi-agency training programme.

3.12 Communications

- 3.13 The outcomes of the JTAI have been disseminated with partners as part of formulating the 'Written Statement of Proposed Action' and instigating the improvements identified by the joint inspectorates.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 The Barnsley Local Safeguarding Partnership and the Council's Senior Management Team have both been consulted on the outcomes of the JTAI and the next steps.

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 The exclusive purpose of this report is to inform Cabinet of the findings of the recent JTAI and the next steps in responding to these findings.

6. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 Our ambition is to ensure the commissioning and provision of an outstanding and seamless range of services for all children, young people and families in the Borough. As part of this, we are committed to seeking all forms of external assurance on the quality and consistency of services, including benchmarking them with similar services in the Region and nationally.
- 6.2 External assurance, including the LGA's peer review of children's social care in the Borough and our own self-evaluation activity form an important triangulation with such inspections on the current quality of practice and provision. This will help in closing any gaps particularly in preparation for the Council's next full inspection under the Ofsted ILACS Framework.

7. GLOSSARY

- 7.1 None, applicable

8. LIST OF APPENDICES

- 8.1 Appendix 1: Joint Targeted Area Inspection of Barnsley – Letter from the Joint Inspectorates'

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 If you would like to inspect background papers for this report, please email governance@barnsley.gov.uk so that appropriate arrangements can be made

10. REPORT SIGN OFF

Financial consultation & sign off	Senior Financial Services officer consulted and date Steve Loach (08/08/2022)
Legal consultation & sign off	Legal Services officer consulted and date <i>Jason Field 9/8/22</i>

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