

BARNSELY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT OF: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES

TITLE: JOINT TARGETED AREA INSPECTION OF THE MULTI-AGENCY RESPONSE TO THE IDENTIFICATION OF INITIAL NEED AND RISK AMONG VULNERABLE CHILDREN: DRAFT WRITTEN STATEMENT OF ACTION

REPORT TO:	CABINET
Date of Meeting	19 OCTOBER 2022
Cabinet Member Portfolio	CHILDREN'S SERVICES
Key Decision	Yes
Public or Private	Public

Purpose of report

To seek Cabinet's approval for the submission of the Barnsley Local Safeguarding Children Partnership's (LSCP) draft Written Statement of Action in response to the findings of the recent Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI)

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 thrive by having access to effective early help and support.

Recommendations

That Cabinet:

Approves for submission to Ofsted, the draft Written Statement of Response to the recent findings of the JTAI concerning the multi-agency response to the identification of initial need and risk among vulnerable children, by the deadline of 25th October 2022.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 On 21st September, Cabinet considered the outcomes of the recent JTAI. 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”

1.2 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.

1.3 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.

1.4 As a result, the JTAI 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 improvement plan to be overseen by the Barnsley LSCP Board.

1.5 Whilst the outcomes highlighted in the joint inspectorates' letter, appended to the Cabinet report considered on 21st September, are not a judgement, such external assessments provide both validation on the quality of provision and where provision and practice can be continually improved to match our ambitions for all children and young people in the Borough.

2. PROPOSAL

2.1 Draft Written Statement of Proposed Action

2.2 The draft Written Statement is detailed in the Appendix to this report. This document includes a plan on the remedial action to be taken particularly in response to the areas identified as in need of improvement during the JTAI (*Please see Paragraph 1.3 of this report*)

2.3 Cabinet is requested to review the draft Statement, including the improvement plan with a view to its submission to Ofsted by the deadline of 25th October. Similarly, the draft Statement has been considered and endorsed by our local statutory partners. In this instance, the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has agreed to waive the Committee's right to 'Call-in' the draft Statement to enable the Authority to meet the deadline without prejudicing its right to consider the Written Statement, on a later date.

2.4 Following submission, Ofsted will consider the draft Statement on behalf of the joint inspectorates and once it is satisfied that the actions incorporated into the draft Statement are achievable, the improvements will begin as part of our ongoing commitment of closing any gaps in the quality of practice and provision and enhance our capacity to achieve our ambition for commissioning the highest quality range of services for children, young people and families in the Borough.

2.5 In terms of the overall inspection framework for children's services, the Statement will inform the lines of enquiry during any future joint or single agency activity by the inspectorates.

2.6 Risks

2.7 Cabinet will note that the draft Statement contains an initial RAG rating of the six improvement priorities. Improvement Priority 5 concerns the steps to be

taken to ensure provision of an appropriate adult when young people are arrested by the police. Here, a review of provision has been instigated which will lead to recommendations concerning service specifications and subsequent commissioning and procurement. A Regionally procured contracted service is likely to emerge and in case any delays in the review, development of service specifications and commissioning emerge, such risks will be managed and mitigated in accordance with the Council's risk management policy and procedure.

- 2.8 The progress achieved concerning the improvement priorities, will be overseen by the Barnsley LSCP's Board, including the Independent Scrutineer who will act as a '*Critical and impartial friend*' within the process. Progress will, also, be reported each month to the Cabinet Spokesperson (Children's Services) and as part of quarterly corporate and children's social care performance reporting arrangements to Cabinet, Senior Management Team and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

3 IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

3.1 Financial and Risk

- 3.2 The Service Director – Finance or his representative has been consulted as part of drafting this report. There are no specific financial implications arising from this report, however the implementation of the Written Statement of Action (WSA) could result in additional financial implications for Children Social Care and the Council as the lead partner in the multi-agency safeguarding arrangement. Any financial impact (e.g. workforce / staffing) would be assessed and considered alongside other service improvement priorities.

3.3 Legal

- 3.4 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.

- 3.5 There are no legal implications other than those outlined in the report.

3.6 Equality

- 3.7 Similarly, there are no implications for promoting equality or eliminating unlawful discrimination emerging through the outcomes of the JTAI or the draft Written Statement.

3.8 Sustainability

- 3.9 There are no implications for sustainability in the Borough arising through 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 did identify specific instances where the quality of practice was 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 Following Cabinet's recent consideration of the outcomes of the JTAI there are no further communications implications emerging through today's report.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 The Barnsley Local Safeguarding Children Partnership, together with the Council's Senior Management Team have been consulted and have endorsed the draft Written Statement, following the recent JTAI.

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 The exclusive purpose of this report is to present the draft Written Statement of Action which has been formulated in response to the outcomes of the recent JTAI, to Cabinet for agreement and approval prior to the Written Statement's submission to Ofsted.

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 The outcomes of the JTAI and the subsequent draft Written Statement of Action will inform our ongoing commitment to further improve the range of provision as we prepare for our next full inspection of the Local Authority's Children's Services.

7. GLOSSARY

- 7.1 None, applicable.

8.0 LIST OF APPENDICES

- 8.1 Appendix 1: Multi-agency Response to the Initial Identification of Need and Risk in Barnsley: Draft Written Statement of Action

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 <i>Joshua Amahwe (14/09/2022)</i>
Legal consultation & sign off	Legal Services officer consulted and date <i>14/09/22 Jason Field</i>

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