

## Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING/ DECISION MAKER:	<b>Early Years, Children and Youth Panel.</b>	
MEETING/ DECISION DATE:	<b>24<sup>TH</sup> November 2014</b>	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
TITLE:	Update on the Progress of the Specialist Services Improvement Plan following the March 2013 Ofsted Inspection and impact on Performance.	
WARD:	All	
<b>AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM</b>		
<b>List of attachments to this report: Improvement plan final April 2014</b>		

### 1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 The Safeguarding arrangements of Childrens Social Care were inspected by Ofsted in March 2013. The inspection judged that the safeguarding arrangements for young people were "Adequate". Our response to this was to form a Service Improvement Board with the remit to oversee the drawing-up and implementation of a service improvement plan that sought to address the key performance issues raised by Ofsted. The Board first met in May 2013 and concluded the programme set out in the plan in April 2014. Good progress against all areas had been made, but there a number of areas that the Board recognised where a consistent vigilance, sense of development and position of healthy challenge must be maintained. Therefore it was agreed that from July 2014 we would form a more long-standing "Service Development Board" based on similar principles of the "Improvement" board. This board has now met on three occasions with a remit of maintaining service developments.
- 1.2 This paper seeks to update the board on the progress of both of these boards.

### 2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 There are no specific recommendations attached to this paper, it is tabled for the purposes of up-date and discussion.

### 3 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

- 3.1 There are no direct resource implications set out in this paper. However the paper does need to acknowledge the context and potential implications of poor Ofsted inspections. Ofsted openly acknowledges that it's new inspection

framework has “raised the bar” in terms of its expectations of what is deemed as “good” practice from Local Authorities in relation to Children’s Social Care. Of the 40 plus inspections undertaken so far under the new framework, only 9 LA’s have received the overall judgement of “Good”, no LA has been judged “Outstanding” under the new criteria. Only one Unitary Authority has received a ‘Good’ judgement.

3.2 Those LA’s that have received ‘Inadequate’ judgements have faced considerable financial pressures in relation to addressing concerns. These financial pressures are mostly associated with a subsequent large turn-over and loss of staff and in improving and significant and rapid investment in “turning around” services.

#### **4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS AND BASIS FOR PROPOSAL**

4.1 The local authority has a range of statutory duties to children in need of help (including early help), protection and care, set out primarily in the Children Act 1989. The Children Act has been amended and added to by later legislation, notably the Children (leaving care) Act 2000, Children Act 2004 and Children & Families Act 2014.

4.2 Services commissioned and provided by local authorities and their partners to meet these duties are subject to inspection by OFSTED. The previous inspection of B&NES Children’s Services was carried out within the Safeguarding & Looked After Children inspection framework, which has been replaced since summer 2013 by the Single Inspection Framework (SIF). The SIF has broadened the scope of inspection including early help services, has a sharper and more intensive focus on the child and family’s journey, experience and outcomes, and has raised the bar in respect of standards. The SIF includes an inspection of the work of the Local Safeguarding Children’s Board (LSCB) alongside the work of Children’s Services.

4.3 B&NES Children’s Services play a central and essential role in delivering the vision set out in the B&NES Children and Young People’s Plan, that ‘we want all children and young people to enjoy childhood and to be well prepared for adult life’ and in meeting the priority outcomes set out in the plan that all children should be safe, healthy and enjoy equal life chances.

#### **5 THE REPORT**

5.1 The Ofsted report following the completion of the inspection identified the following key areas that the Local Authority should consider as areas for improvement; a) The quality and consistency of its Assessments on families and the quality of its Plans for intervention with families. (b) The gathering and use of “Service-user” feed-back. (c) Use of Advocacy for young people in meetings (d) Ensuring that all staff and partners had a clear understanding of thresholds. (e) The way in which Social Workers address and include issues of “culture” within our assessments and recording.

5.2 The formation of the Improvement Board in April 2013 was developed to take forward the ideas and initiatives that could begin to address these issues. We sought Board members from all parts of Childrens Services and from all levels, to ensure that all points of view were represented and that potential solutions were heard from front-line staff and were given appropriate consideration.

5.3 The Improvement Board made good progress on all of these issues as well as a number of other subsidiary issues that were also included in the Ofsted report. The improvement Board was able to oversee a number of innovations in terms of how assessments and Plans are undertaken and written up that would sharpen the focus of

practitioners as well as make it easier for them to spend more time with young people rather than spend time on administrative tasks. The Board was also able to identify areas where practitioners felt they needed more training to improve practice and was also able to produce a series of good practice guides in terms of improving practice and the level of analysis in work with families.

- 5.4 In addition to this the Board also oversaw the development and implementation of new policies in relation to the way that work is Audited and Quality Assured and the ways in which the level of caseloads of individual staff are regularly reviewed to ensure that staff have “do-able” workloads and receive appropriate support.
- 5.5 In the spring of this year the Board recognised that it had made good progress on many of the specific recommendations set out in the Ofsted report. However it also recognised that some of the issues it was working on (such as the consistency and quality of written reports/assessments and Plans are areas that will require continued development and as such are areas where we can also strive to develop further. In order to embody this desire for continued development and learning we took the decision to re-launch the Board as a “Service Development” Board, which would have many of the same drivers, but that the emphasis would very much be on continuing to develop services because it is right and desirable to do so, rather than as a specific response to a particular report or inspection. The new Service Development Board has now met on three occasions and retains the same ethos of involving a range of staff from across the whole spectrum of teams, skills and positions with Children’s Services. This ensures that the voices of all staff are represented and make a significant impact on developing the ways that services are delivered.

## **6 RATIONALE**

- 6.1 As outlined above the rationale for continuing the work of these Boards is to ensure that we do not see Improvement as a “one-off” event and is recognised as something that all staff need to be involved with and that will need to be responsive to new ideas and approaches to how help to vulnerable families is delivered.
- 6.2 It will also be important to acknowledge the impact that these changes have had on the performance of the Division. The new Commissioner/Provider arrangements that were implemented just after the Ofsted inspection (April 2013) have also influenced how we have approached the monitoring of performance and the impact of the changes that have been undertaken. The new arrangements mean that at the end of each quarter, commissioners hold the provider (Specialist Childrens Division) to account for its performance.
- 6.3 Whilst there are a considerable number of performance measures that are reviewed at these meetings, some of the headline performance trends/patterns are as follows; a) Numbers of young people subject to Child Protection Plans have remained stable for the past 18 months. These remain between 120-130 and are below the national average and slightly below the average for our comparator group of Local Authorities. In a similar fashion, we have maintained a steady number of young people who are “Looked After” by BaNES. For the past 18 months this has consistently remained between 135-145 young people. Again this is slightly below the average for our comparator LA’s, and what is pleasing about both of these, is that they have remained consistent and not liable to wild variation which is indicative of a good and consistent understanding of thresholds and level of risk.

6.4 In addition to these key performance areas, we have also managed to improve the timeliness of our Assessments of families which currently stands at 91.7% of all assessments completed within the 45 day figure. This ensures that families receive a prompt decision on what the Local Authority feel should happen and what services/plan they can provide following a referral. Our performance in relation to reducing cases that “bounce-back” following closure has also improved. Currently only 21.5% of referrals were open to the LA 12 months ago. The target figure is to keep this below 22% and last year’s performance was 24%. In a similar fashion the percentage of Child Protection cases that require a further CP intervention within two years of the previous involvement has consistently been under 5% (currently 4.1%) with the national guidance suggesting that any figure of under 10% is good performance. Both of these performance measures are indicative of a good quality of intervention which has been successful in reducing risk and reducing the need for families to back into the remit of Children’s services.

6.5 There are also some areas where we are still needing to work hard at improving performance. Current statistics suggest that we have seen a drop in contacts from schools. This might be because some schools are now providing increased pastoral support to young people themselves via the Direct Schools Grant. However this does need further investigation to ensure it is not in relation to any perceived change in thresholds. Although 91.7% of Assessments are completed on time, a significant amount of these Assessments appear to take a long time to complete in comparison the relative complexity of the presenting problem. We need to undertake further work to ensure that more Assessments are completed within 10 and 20 days which would be more proportionate to the presenting issue.

## 7 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

7.1 Not applicable

## 8 CONSULTATION

In preparing this report I have consulted with our Commissioning team.

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<b>Background papers</b>	<i>Quarterly Performance Data Specialist Services Service Development Plan</i>
<b>Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format</b>	