

Bath & North East Somerset Council		
MEETING	Children & Young People Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel	
MEETING DATE:	15 May 2018	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
TITLE:	Update Report to Scrutiny Panel; Progress on Ofsted Improvement Plan.	
WARD:	All	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report: a) Copy of Improvement Action Plan.		

## **1 THE ISSUE**

- 1.1 This paper seeks to update PDS Panel on the progress made in addressing the 8-Key Areas of challenge to the Council by Ofsted inspectors following their four week long inspection in April / May 2017. It is now one year since the inspection, and therefore it is appropriate that Councillors are updated on the progress of the improvement plan. This paper will also update on the progress of the 3-specific (but separate) recommendations relating to the BANES LSCB.

## **2 RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 There are no specific recommendations from this report. Rather it seeks to provide information on progress and implementation of the Improvement Plan.

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

- 3.1 Not applicable

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

4.1 Not applicable

## **5 THE REPORT**

5.1 The inspection of Children's Social Care by Ofsted Inspectors in April / May 2017 found BANES to be judged "Good". This placed the Council in the top 30% performing Children's Services in England. Only one other LA in the South-West (Cornwall / Isles of Scilly) also achieved "Good" status.

Despite the work to achieve this outcome we have taken a view that continued improvement and a need to maintain progress and standards is the most appropriate way to ensure that the needs of vulnerable children remain as a priority of the Council. This approach of continuous improvement and challenge is also the most likely way to ensure that standards and expectations remain high. The recommendations for action at the conclusion of the inspection were as follows:

### **Recommendations**

1. Improve the quality of child in need, child protection and pathway plans so that they consistently set out specific measurable actions with timescales for delivery and clear contingencies.
2. Strengthen the quality of child in need work. Ensure that children are visited in accordance with their plans, and that reviews take place regularly to monitor progress and are overseen by managers.
3. Ensure rigorous oversight of children subject to pre-proceedings so that practice is robust and decisive in response to increasing concern, and that drift and delay are prevented.
4. Strengthen arrangements to identify and respond to children who are privately fostered. Ensure that decisions to support arrangements are informed by appropriate assessments that include required checks and are overseen by managers.
5. Take action to respond to the rising number of fixed-term exclusions for children looked after so that they are reduced effectively.
6. Ensure proportionate visiting and proactive support for care leavers in response to escalating need.
7. Ensure that services are appropriately resourced to deliver manageable caseloads and effective supervision that proactively drives planning for children and prevents drift and delay.
8. Improve the proportion of 16- to 18-year-olds who are engaged in education, employment or training.

The recommendations for the LSCB were as follows:

## **Recommendations:**

1. Strengthen the range of performance information provided to the board, to include the timeliness of visits to children following the point of referral, as well as the statutory visiting frequency.
2. Ensure that the annual report incorporates findings from the private fostering annual report and the independent reviewing officer annual report, and provides a rigorous assessment of the performance and effectiveness of local services.
3. Strengthen current arrangements for partners to raise awareness of child sexual exploitation through licensing activity in Bath and North East Somerset.

Following the publication of the inspections report in July 2017, every LA has to produce an Action Plan to address the recommendations made by inspectors. The BANES Action Plan was submitted to the DfE and Ofsted in October 2017 and addresses the 8-recommendations. (There is no requirement for the LSCB to provide and Action Plan).

In order to ensure that the Action Plan is implemented and work progressed we have formed an 'Improvement Board' consisting of senior managers with a number of Task and Finish Groups providing support to the work that is being undertaken. These groups have deliberately involved both, Social Workers / practitioners as well as utilising the views of young people to ensure that the changes and developments we make are also informed by a range of people who work within the organisation and understand the importance of improving services.

The work of the board has 8-work-streams, each one addressing a particular recommendation from the Inspection report. Each of the work-streams are reviewed and updated at each Improvement Board.

Thus far some of the key achievements and areas of progress for the Board are as follows:

- New guidance on "Parental Engagement" which should improve ways in which SW's involve Young people and Families in key decisions. This will help address the challenges in relation to the quality and consistency of planning and help determine clearer time-scales for the completion of actions.
- The development of a "Plan on a Page" for Young People to assist them have a non-jargon, age related version of their plan. This will also help to improve the quality and consistency of planning.
- We are designing and implementing a series of workshops for staff which focus on what makes a good plan and how to improve the engagement of families. This will assist in reducing drift and delay in the successful implementation of the plans.
- We have reviewed and re-designed our QA Framework in light of the inspection to strengthen QA / Audit processes so that we can further improve the consistency of planning and practice and reduce drift and delay.

- We have re-designed the Performance data available to front-line managers so that they can more easily access data about the performance of their team and any operational pressures that might be emerging. This will improve the monitoring of visits, planning and timeliness of interventions.
- A revised template and system for tracking the progress of cases that are, in, or on the cusp of legal proceedings. Again this is designed to improve timeliness of planning and reduce drift.
- We have re-designed publicity with regard to Private Fostering. Changes to the structure of the service delivery that had just been implemented at the time of the inspection are now firmly embedded, with a dedicated post linked to Private Fostering.
- We have changed the structure of the Duty Team, and reviewed processes to provide a more responsive service and ensure faster response times.
- Commissioned the Virtual School Head to review and report on all exclusions of LAC – to actively challenge schools that seek to exclude LAC. A report on this work was presented to the April 2018 meeting of the Improvement Board which confirmed that these pro-active resources were beginning to positively impact onto fixed-term exclusions.
- We are reviewing the plans for Care-leavers and the over-arching initiatives in relation to improving practice in relation to planning will also strengthen planning for Care-leavers.
- We have commissioned the DfE lead on Care-leavers to audit practice in relation to Care-leavers to test and check current practice. This will take place in October 2018.
- The April Board also heard an update in relation to NEET which confirmed that currently the NEET figure for 16-18 year olds is currently 3.4%, the lowest in the South West region.

It is also important to highlight that at this stage we envisage the life-span of the Improvement Board continuing for at least another 6-9 months in its present format so that we can be assured that the changes outlined above are taking root, and proving to be effective. The progress of the Improvement Plan will also be discussed with representatives at our “Annual Conversation” meeting scheduled for the end of June.

## **6 RATIONALE**

6.1 As previously stated within this report, we have taken a very deliberate approach of seeing these recommendations within a frame-work “continuous improvement” rather than as specific criticism. We have also sought to involve practitioners and young people in some aspects of the work, in order to ensure that different view-points are incorporated into the work.

## **7 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 7.1 There were no other options considered within this process. There is a requirement that all Local Authorities produce an Action Plan at the end of each inspection which is then considered by inspectors as part of any subsequent inspection.

## **8 CONSULTATION**

- 8.1 Not Applicable

## **9 RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 9.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

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<b>Background papers</b>	<i>Improvement Action Plan</i>
<b>Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format</b>	