

Appendix 1 - Summary of progress against Bristol Children's Services Improvement Plan 2015 – 2016

This document summarises key areas of progress across the four priority areas of the Bristol Children's Services Improvement Plan 2015-2016:

- i. Improved outcomes for care leavers** – to maintain regular contact with social workers, undertake effective Pathway Planning and increase the number of care leavers in education, employment and training
- ii. Consistently good social work practice** for children and families
- iii. Improved educational outcomes for children in care** – to close the attainment gap and complete all Personal Education Plans to a high standard
- iv. Leadership, Management and Governance** – including new corporate parenting strategy

1. Improved outcomes for care leavers:

- **Supporting staff** to ensure that they are in touch with care leavers, that they have quality plans in place, and are delivering good quality work. Key targets for being “in touch” and having Pathway Plans in place have now been met.
- **EET outcomes for care leavers.** Joint work across the council and shared accountability has increased the proportion of care leavers in EET. For 2015/16 58% care leavers were in EET, an increase of 18 percentage points from 40% in 2014/15. There are also increasing numbers of care leavers entering Higher Education, with a new Higher Education offer supported by both Bristol universities.
- **Supporting care leavers in all facets of their life** including their health, accommodation, and financial support. A high proportion of young people have been able to “Stay Put” with their foster carers, which often leads to better outcomes. Innovative work with the DWP has also created a bespoke pathway to benefits for care leavers.
- **Prioritise the views and wishes of care leavers.** Structures are now in place to respond to care leavers' wishes and experiences. This includes involvement in the DfE supported New Belongings project, the appointment of a Care Leaver Ambassador apprentice, and development of a Participation Service with Barnardo's (at no cost to the Council).

2. Quality of Social Work Practice:

- Embedding the existing Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) for children's social work. A large amount of audit work has taken place which has provided a better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in social work practice. This learning has been used to target training for staff and has been shared with practitioners via

the feedback loop. Compliance with the QAF is improving and is being bolstered by audits from the leadership team, including members of the Improvement Board.

- Weaknesses identified around the oversight and challenge from the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) Service have been addressed, with 60% of IRO cases now judged to be “good” or better.
- Pathway Plans for Care leavers have also seen an improvement in quality and further improvement is expected following training and feedback.
- Ofsted identified weaknesses in arrangements to safeguard children and young people that went missing from home or care. Processes have been improved to record all instances on the Liquidlogic Children’s System, which are now shared and analysed with partners for a better multi-agency response.

3. Improved educational outcomes for children in care

- The target of 75% of all children in care accessing ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’ schools or alternative provision has been achieved. Currently 83.2% are placed in ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’ settings in Bristol, and 78.7% of those placed out of authority.
- For summer 2015, national assessment performance for Bristol children in care was positive at Key Stages 1 and 2 and better than England averages (e.g. %L4+ Reading / Writing / Mathematics was 61% compared to 52% nationally) but inadequate at Key Stage 4 (e.g. %5+A*-C (including English & Mathematics) 7% compared to 13.8% nationally). Key areas of progress include:
 - School Improvement Officer for Children in Care visits focussed on improving progress and outcomes through challenging but supportive visits (focus on key stages 4 and 2)
 - HOPE staff attend a high number of personal education plan meeting and act as advocates, especially where there has been underachievement.
 - Best practice is being shared through resource packs and active learning sets for school based professionals delivered by HOPE team.
- The target of 80% of personal education plans (PEPs) being judged (at least) good against LA criteria is being achieved.

4. Leadership, management and governance

- Successful launch of the Corporate Parenting Strategy and Pledge to Children in Care and Care Leavers, approved by Cabinet in November 2015, which outlines how the Council and its partners intend to improve support for children in care and care leavers.

- Strong Governance arrangements have assisted the delivery of improvement work. The Plan is overseen by the Children’s Services Improvement Board, chaired by the Strategic Director for People. Regular review by Senior Leadership Team, Scrutiny, Corporate Parenting Panel and the Assistant Mayor ensures robust oversight from elected members and strengthens the Council’s role as Corporate Parent.
- The work of the Improvement Board and delivery leads named in the Plan have followed an approach to improving outcomes that required:
 - Shared accountability for improvement across teams and directorates
 - Focus on performance - up to date and accurate performance reporting which is visible to all
 - High aspirations reflected in challenging targets
 - Sustainable Change – systems, processes, and ways of working are embedded and not reliant on one-off funding