

People Scrutiny Commission

26 September 2016



Report of: John Readman, Strategic Director - People

Title: Bristol Children's Services Improvement Plan 2016 - 2017

Ward: Citywide

Officer Presenting Report: Hilary Brooks, Service Director - Care and Support Children & Families

Contact Telephone Number: 0117 903 7951

Recommendation

- 1. To review the draft Children's Services Improvement Plan for 2016-2017 and provide comments prior to its approval.**
- 2. To endorse cross-Council support to deliver Improvement Plan priorities and corporate parenting responsibilities.**

Summary

This report presents the draft Children's Services Improvement Plan 2016/17 prior to going to Cabinet for approval in October 2016. A summary of progress against delivery of the Bristol Children's Services Improvement Plan 2015-2016 is also provided.

The significant issues in the report are:

As set out in the main report and within the draft Children's Services Improvement Plan 2016/17, provided at Appendix 2.



Policy

1. The Improvement Plan will contribute to the new Bristol Strategy for Children, Young People and Families and its recognition of the need to address inequalities of health, wealth and opportunities in the city. The Improvement Plan forms part of a body of work sitting under the strategy and will deliver outcomes and priorities within it.

Consultation

2. **Internal**
All lead officers and teams that contribute to the Improvement Plan.
3. **External**
All lead officers and teams that contribute to the Improvement Plan.
On approval, the Improvement Plan will be shared with relevant partner agencies and member groups, including Corporate Parenting Panel and Bristol Safeguarding Children Board.

Context

4. Introduction

- 4.1 Services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after, and care leavers in Bristol were inspected by Ofsted in October 2014. The overall judgement was that services for these children ‘required improvement’. This included an ‘inadequate’ judgement for the experience and progress of care leavers and a ‘good’ judgement for adoption services.
- 4.2 ‘Getting to Good’ Bristol Children’s Services Improvement Plan 2015-2016, approved by Cabinet in February 2015, was developed to respond to the recommendations following the Ofsted inspection. The Plan focused on the actions required to secure improvement and deliver consistently good services for children and young people in Bristol. Ofsted endorsed the Plan, with praise for “ambitious targets, clear lines of accountability, and strong monitoring arrangements”.
- 4.3 The Plan was designed to provide opportunities to engage the whole Council and partners in the delivery of improved outcomes for some of the most vulnerable children and young people in the City. This was further enhanced by the launch of the Corporate Parenting Strategy and Pledge to Children in Care and Care Leavers, which was approved by Cabinet and endorsed by Full Council in November 2015. Ensuring good outcomes for all looked after children and care leavers is a priority for the Council and the collective responsibility of members and officers as Corporate Parents.
- 4.4 Strong governance arrangements have underpinned the delivery of improvement work. A Children’s Services Improvement Board was established to oversee implementation of the Plan, and to ensure sufficient progress was achieved and deadlines were met. The Board comprises senior leaders and is chaired by the Strategic Director of People to review the Plan on a monthly basis. Regular reporting on progress to Members has taken place through the Assistant Mayor (People) on a monthly basis and the People Directorate Scrutiny every six months. The Bristol

Safeguarding Children Board also monitors the progress of the Plan and it was shared with the Children and Families Board.

- 4.5 The Improvement Plan will contribute to the new Bristol Strategy for Children, Young People and Families and its recognition of the need to address inequalities of health, wealth and opportunities in the city. The Improvement Plan forms part of a body of work sitting under the strategy and will deliver outcomes and priorities within it.

5. How have we done?

- 5.1 A collective focus and drive to deliver key improvement priorities identified by Ofsted have helped to secure sustained improvements in services for children in need of help, protection and in care. A review of progress against delivery of the Bristol Children’s Services Improvement Plan 2015-2016 was undertaken to understand the impact of changes and to identify areas for further improvement. A summary of progress is provided at Appendix 1.
- 5.2 A key area of focus has been to deliver improved services and outcomes for care leavers. Significant improvements have been made, including supporting staff to ensure that they are in touch with care leavers and that they have quality plans in place, as well as increasing the number of care leavers in education, employment and training (EET). For 2015/16 58% care leavers were in EET, an increase of 18 percentage points from 2014/15.
- 5.3 The progress to date in improving outcomes for Bristol care leavers was validated by a visit from the DfE Intervention Team in January 2016. This culminated in a letter from the Minister that praised the good progress made to address the issues raised by Ofsted and welcomed, *“the strong commitment throughout all levels of the Council to improve upon the support that care leavers receive and to ensure that they are given the right opportunities to succeed”*. The Minister was also satisfied that there is no need for further DfE visits, supporting the view of the Intervention Team that services for care leavers are no longer inadequate.
- 5.4 Sustainable changes to processes and structures have been made to secure improved educational outcomes for children in care. This includes improved tracking of children in care students, more robust support and challenge for schools, and improved Personal Education Plan (PEP) quality assurance arrangements and processes. This has culminated in improved outcomes including:
- The target of 80% of personal education plans (PEPs) being judged (at least) good against LA criteria is being achieved.
 - 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% placed out of authority.
 - For summer 2015, national assessment performance was positive at Key Stages 1 and 2 and better than England averages. Key Stage 4 results were lower than England average.
- 5.5 Another key priority was to improve the quality of social work practice. Embedding the existing Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) for children’s social work, which included a large amount of audit work, has provided a better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in social work practice. Pathway Plans for care leavers have shown improvement in quality and the

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.

6. Bristol Children’s Services Improvement Plan 2016-17

- 6.1 Taking into account the progress made during the first year of the post-Ofsted inspection improvement journey, there remain significant challenges to address as we move into the second year.
- 6.2 The Bristol Children’s Services Improvement Plan 2016-17 (provided at Appendix 2) has been developed to reflect emerging priorities and to address known gaps against inspection frameworks. In order to deliver improved services and outcomes for children, young people and families, this Plan:
- Continues to respond to outstanding recommendations from 2014 Ofsted Children’s Services Inspection.
 - Responds to improvement priorities identified by audit, peer review, and independent review of children’s social care.
 - Responds to emerging systemic and demographic challenges and pressures.
 - Ensures that known gaps against relevant inspection frameworks are addressed.
- 6.3 The Year 2 Plan has a greater focus on improving the quality children’s social work. It responds to a recently commissioned independent review of children’s social care, which identified continuing challenges around:
- Increased demand on the system and complexity of care needs.
 - Retention and recruitment of the workforce.
 - Consistency of the quality of social work practice and management oversight.
- 6.4 The Year 1 Plan focussed exclusively on recommendations arising within Ofsted’s Single Inspection Framework (SIF) for inspecting local authority children’s services. The Year 2 Plan covers all elements of the existing SIF as well as the new multi-agency Joint Targeted Area Inspection (JTAI) framework, which assesses contact, referral and decision-making arrangements for children’s social care and the quality of practice in responding to referrals. The JTAI framework also includes a “deep dive” element, which will focus on children who are living with domestic abuse.
- 6.5 The Year 2 Plan is set within the context of increased demand for services and an increasingly challenging financial backdrop. The Plan aims to improve the way we manage demand for services, improve the quality of support we provide to our most vulnerable children, and further improve the outcomes for children in care and care leavers. This will be delivered via six thematic areas:
1. Provide consistently **good social work practice** for children and families.
 2. **Improve outcomes for care leavers** and enable them to move successfully to adulthood.
 3. **Improve outcomes for children in care** and act as an effective corporate parent.

4. Provide effective **leadership, management and governance** to ensure robust decision-making and manageable caseloads.
 5. Enable a **stable and resilient workforce** that feel valued and who choose to develop their careers in Bristol.
 6. Deliver effective **multi-agency contact and referral arrangements** for identifying and managing the range of risks of harm to children and young people.
- 6.6 To ensure that the Year 2 Plan uses available resources in the best way, improvement work will be focussed on priorities:
- That pose a significant risk to children’s outcomes.
 - That address system-wide and leadership challenges.
 - That provide assurance to leadership that key risks to the authority are mitigated.
 - That require additional coordination of resources or capacity to deliver the required change.
- 6.7 The additional resources to support improvement that were available during Year 1 in the form of project management capacity and fixed-term operational posts are coming to an end. In drawing up the Year 2 Plan, the actions identified to sustain gains made and to continue to improve have been designed within the context of existing resources only.
- 6.8 Consistent with Year 1, challenging targets have been set for key performance measures to help drive improvement. Targets are based on current performance, benchmarking information from Core Cities and Statistical Neighbours, and an assessment of the timing and efficacy of improvement actions.

7. Implementing the Year 2 Plan

- 7.1 This Plan aims to deliver consistently good services for children and families to ensure that children in Bristol are safe. More detailed operational plans that contribute to this Plan will drive individual service improvement. The necessary actions, targets and outcomes are incorporated into Service Delivery Plans and Team Plans.
- 7.2 The Plan sets out the actions that will be undertaken, the expected outcomes, improvement measures, lead officers, targets and due dates. The Plan will continue to be overseen by the Children’s Services Improvement Board and progress will be reported to Members and partners via existing arrangements.

Proposal

8. Prior to Cabinet approval, People Scrutiny Commission are asked to:
1. **Review the draft Children’s Services Improvement Plan for 2016-2017 and provide comments.**
 2. **Endorse cross-Council support to deliver Improvement Plan priorities and corporate parenting responsibilities.**

Other Options Considered

9. Children’s Services Improvement Board decided that a Year 2 Improvement Plan and its continued oversight by the Board were required to deliver necessary improvements against existing inspection frameworks and to respond to emerging challenges.

Risk Assessment

10. The delivery of the Year 2 Improvement Plan with ongoing challenge and support by the Children’s Services Improvement Board is deemed to be the most effective way of ensuring that:
- Gaps against inspection frameworks are understood and acted upon
 - Improvement work is coordinated and its impact is understood
 - Monitoring and challenge arrangements are in place to ensure that improvement targets are delivered
 - Improvement actions and targets are owned and align with operation plans
 - Improvement priorities respond to emerging risks

Public Sector Equality Duties

- 10a) Before making a decision, section 149 Equality Act 2010 requires that each decision-maker considers the need to promote equality for persons with the following “protected characteristics”: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. Each decision-maker must, therefore, have due regard to the need to:
- i) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Equality Act 2010.
 - ii) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to --
 - remove or minimise disadvantage suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic;
 - take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of people who do not share it (in relation to disabled people, this includes, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons’ disabilities);
 - encourage persons who share a protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.
 - iii) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to –
 - tackle prejudice; and
 - promote understanding.

10b) The nature of this work does not require an equality impact assessment.

Legal and Resource Implications

Legal

No decisions are requested from this report. Full legal implications will be provided for Cabinet approval.

Financial

(a) Revenue

No decisions are requested from this report. Full revenue financial implications will be provided for Cabinet approval.

(b) Capital

No decisions are requested from this report. Full capital financial implications will be provided for Cabinet approval.

Land

Not applicable

Personnel

Not applicable

Appendices:

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

Appendix 2 - ‘Getting to Good’ Bristol Children’s Services Improvement Plan 2016 – 2017

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

Background Papers:

[2014 Ofsted Inspection Report – Bristol City Council Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers.](#)

[February 2015 Cabinet Report - Children’s Services Improvement Plan, in response to the Ofsted Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers.](#)

[November 2015 cabinet Report - Corporate Parenting Strategy and Pledge to Children in Care and Care Leavers](#)