

Audit Committee

6 March 2023



Report of: Ben Mosley – Head of the Executive Office, Bristol City Council

Title: Review of External Inspections of Council Services 2022/23

Ward: City Wide

Recommendation

Audit Committee is asked to:

1. Note the findings of the external inspections;
2. Note any improvement actions required as a consequence of the inspection findings and, where appropriate, the management response;
3. Note the assurance arrangements in place that oversee the council's response to inspection findings.

Summary

This report provides a high-level overview of external inspection activity of council services since February 2022. It sets out key inspection findings along with arrangements for implementing any recommendations arising from them. The report also provides a summary of the outcomes of any peer reviews relating to council services which may have taken place since February 2022.

The significant issues in the report are:

The outcomes of external inspections of council services are described in the report.



1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Audit Members of the external inspections and peer review activity that has taken place since February 2022. It summarises external inspection and peer review activity and sets out any key findings and recommendations.

1.2 This report does not consider any outcome or findings of any Ofsted Inspections carried out in 2023 which have yet to be reported to Full Council.

2. National Discharge Taskforce Workstream 4 – Adult Social Care (ASC) Enquiry Review (April 2022)

2.1 The virtual enquiry Review took place on 6th and 7th April. It included a series of focus groups and interviews with staff and partners from across the health and care system, including both providers and commissioners, and the voluntary sector. Teams spoken to included:

- i. Wider System partners
- ii. Directors, leadership teams and staff from Adult Social Care
- iii. Workforce Development Leads from BNSSG
- iv. Integrated discharge teams / ToC Hub members
- v. BNSSG Care Provision Programme Board
- vi. LA Strategic Commissioning Group and Commissioning and Brokerage teams
- vii. Healthwatch
- viii. Independent provider representatives
- ix. BNSSG voluntary sector representatives

2.2 The Peer Review noted that BNSSG is a complex system with three Local Authorities and two acute hospital trusts. The Local Authorities are very different in terms of their political administrations and their populations – urban, rural, pockets of real poverty as well as significant wealth.

2.3 The review noted there is a strong commitment from the Directors of Adult Social Care to work together and it noted there are some real opportunities to review how that happens, particularly in relation to the future model of integrated/ aligned primary, community health and social care across the whole geography.

2.4 The review also noted there is a desire to ensure people get the best outcomes following a stay in hospital but that has not always been possible during the recent pandemic and

there is an opportunity with the three LAs and the Community Health provider to review the model, the approach to D2A, the use of the health rehabilitation and the social care reablement to streamline both the process and the use of resources. The review noted this will need a collective strategic vision and ambition underpinned by local operational arrangements to deliver a more integrated / aligned approach.

- 2.5 The review found that there is a will to deliver a Home First approach but it was not within a shared strategy and ambition and so is not driving that approach – there was concern expressed that the D2A process does not have a strong enough focus on people’s outcomes and that sometimes resulted in people being moved into beds when they could have gone home. The review also found that System leaders would benefit from setting themselves some agreed principles within a strategic plan across the system, which each LA delivers according to the local need together with local community and primary health partners.
- 2.6 The review commented that the responsibility for discharge decisions needs a more joined up approach and there is good opportunity for the three LAs and the Community Health Provider to work together to design a new model of community support to enable decision making for people to be more person centred and responsive.
- 2.7 It was also noted that developing a shared data set which focuses on outcomes for people is important to build a common approach to achieving the best for the population and this needs to be supplemented by a qualitative approach to understand how the discharge process is working for people and for the staff working within the system.
- 2.8 The observations identified by the peer review are being taken forward by the Executive Director for Adults and Communities.

3. Libraries LGA Peer Challenge (May 2022)

3.1 The LGA undertook an Online Peer Challenge on 16th & 17th May 2022. The peer team prepared for the peer challenge by reviewing a range of documents and information in order to ensure they were familiar with the council and the challenges it is facing. The team then spent 2 days working online with Bristol, during which they:

- i. Spoke to 36 people including a range of council staff together with councillors and external partners and stakeholders.
- ii. Gathered information and views from more than 12 meetings and additional research and reading.
- iii. Collectively spent more than 70 hours to determine their findings – the equivalent of 1 person spending nearly 2 weeks in Bristol.

3.2 The Council asked the peer team to focus on the following three questions:

- i. How can new models of delivery, support the council to achieve its outcomes within the available budget?

- ii. How can co-location and new models of delivery improve efficiency and support service/organisational outcomes?
- iii. Can co-location enable council assets to be used more flexibly – e.g., opening hours, providing access to user to use self-serve machines, oversight by other staff, different delivery models, use of spare space, joint customer base?

3.3 The following are the peer team's key recommendations to the Council:

- i. Revise or rewrite the Library Strategy in line with Corporate Strategy and emerging Estates Rationalisation proposals. Ensure there is a strong and compelling narrative for libraries to be strong deliverers and enablers in cross-cutting themes such as Children and Young People, Economy and Skills and Health, Care & Well Being.
- ii. Ensure that the revised Library Strategy is supported by an appropriate Delivery Plan to realise the vision. Where relevant, ensure that the library service is flexible where it can be on its demands for space and staffing facilities
- iii. Provide significant opportunities for member engagement to help build cross party ownership, trust and confidence for the future of Bristol's libraries including Scrutiny, task and finish groups and member seminars as necessary.
- iv. Visit other local authorities named in this report to see options around co-location and community managed libraries and see what works well and what is best fit for Bristol's residents.
- v. Take advantage of Local Government Association training and mentoring/support for new Executive Members and with Local Government Association (LGA) support seek out members who have led similar change programmes.

3.4 The peer team found that Bristol's library service delivers well in comparison with other 'core' cities such as Cardiff, Manchester and Birmingham in relation to books issued and population per library. It also has an excellent reputation for cultural activity and is seen as a leader in the South West for its role in organising and delivering literature events. The peer team also heard of its good partnership work as part of Libraries West as a consortium with six other authorities that allows for seamless book borrowing and a joint pool of e-books, e-audio and other e-resources.

3.5 The city's 27 libraries provide significant coverage throughout the city. The peer team were encouraged by the library service's development of new and well used libraries in a mixed-use setting at Junction 3 and the Bishopston Library. It has recently been awarded £474k from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to install a Business and Intellectual Property Centre (BIPC) which opened in November 2021 and three BIPC locals in branch libraries which will commence in July 2022. The service has also attracted £127k in the recent Library Improvement Fund round to create an event space in the Grade 1 Reference Library in Central Library. Other project-based approaches include the

relocation of Southmead library pending a relocation into a new development, exploration of a new library in Filwood into a new housing development and improvements to Henleaze library.

3.6 However, the peer team found that while the Council’s library service delivers on its statutory functions and supports wider community outcomes, it faces significant challenges due to budgetary pressures. This has resulted in limited opening at many libraries and an ageing building stock. Current library opening times are limited and complex for service users to understand. The high number of libraries also means that staff sickness has a proportionately greater negative impact on whether libraries can open and therefore service resilience in this area is low.

3.7 In overall terms, the peer team heard from members, corporate managers, the library service’s management team and staff and representatives of some community groups that while the library service continues to provide a good level of service provision, the current model of delivery is unsustainable in the face of reducing authority budgets. Members accept the need for transformation change after previous savings proposals have not moved forward.

3.8 The findings and recommendations from this peer challenge will be taken forward by the Director for Management of Place.

4. Tpas ‘Smart’ Review - Housing and Landlord Services (May 2022)

4.1 The Smart review was aimed at giving advice on where how Bristol City Council (BCC) can explore about areas for maximising engagement and create additional evidence that demonstrates residents voice and influence across the housing and landlord services.

4.2 The Smart Review assessment included a self-assessment by BCC and submission of supporting evidence a desktop review. A workshop with staff was held and two workshops with residents to gain further insight to inform the review findings. Some, not all, areas from the initial review were identified for further discussion at the staff and resident workshops to in order to seek additional evidence. The feedback from these workshops was incorporated in the findings of the review.

4.3 The review highlighted the following areas of good practice and areas of development

Table 1: Tpas ‘Smart’ Review - Housing and Landlord Services Outcomes

Overview	Findings/recommendations
Areas of good practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is good evidence of awareness of areas performing well and an approach to continuous improvement across how engagement is delivered. • Staff were positive about resident involvement generally through the workshops and many examples were given.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approach to young people through Youth Mayor and MPs as well as the City Leadership Programme • Scrutiny self-assessments and improvement focus • Moving Forward Together Engagement to inform the developing Engagement Strategy • The Housing Management Board minutes are published and is a good example of transparency • Impressed by the coherent and positive impact made through the community development team.
<p>Areas for development</p>	<p>That the developing Engagement Strategy includes reference to the following key points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly defined roles for residents within the governance arrangements to include Housing Management Board and Scrutiny. • Develop a more outcome-focussed approach to the activities within your framework to ensure greater impact to include monitoring of service standards when developed. • Develop influence and accountability within the framework. • Develop improvements to feedback on how BCC learns from involvement • Enable regular monitoring and assessments of impact and value of the strategy and delivery of service standards in collaboration with residents and as part of this to develop the inclusion of levels of influence and time needed. • Recommendation 1: that the approach to engaging tenants and leaseholders in building safety is addressed urgently. • Recommendation 2: that BCC develop greater transparency in complaints reporting and engage residents in this service area. • Recommendation 3: increasing the level of housing and landlord services performance information made available to residents.

5. Regional Peer Challenge into safeguarding in schools (September 2022)

5.1 Bristol City Council hosted Cornwall Council for a regional peer challenge into safeguarding in schools on the 14th and 15th September 2022.

5.2 Peers met with service users and practitioners who spoke about working to support children and their families achieve better outcomes in Bristol City, specifically with reference to partnership working to safeguard children in schools.

5.3 Across the service the peer challenge team found evidence that there was a clear team around the school approach, underpinned by the council's Belonging Strategy. The peer challenge team found that there was a good understanding of the professional support available, and practitioners knew where to access this, e.g., Social Worker or Personal Advisor, Safer Options team; Safeguarding and Education Team, Designated Lead within a school/college. The peer challenge team saw evidence of a range of community-based interventions which are well developed and well understood.

5.4 The peer challenge team found there was a strong commitment to improve the life chances and outcomes of the children and young people with whom they support with some evidence of the child's lived experience being captured in assessments and plans.

5.5 In terms of areas of improvement, the peer challenge team found there has been a lot of strategic activity, however it saw limited evidence of this being fully embedded in practice to date, and it did not see clear evidence whether this was yet having a positive impact in terms of outcomes for children.

5.6 The peer challenge team found that some documentation is overly long and it would be difficult to navigate for children and families. Greater use of the child's own words to describe their lived experience would provide more contextual authenticity to the plans.

5.7 The peer challenge team made 5 recommendations following their visit:

- i. Continue to embed trauma informed practice which will support schools to engage with Bristol City council's agenda to reduce school exclusions and school moves
- ii. Further develop policy, practice guidance and approaches in relation to child-on-child abuse
- iii. Record multi-agency approaches consistently to evidence effective outcomes for children, for future learning
- iv. Consider prioritising key recommendations from recent reviews to reduce the risk of dilution
- v. Consolidate the range of pilot projects and learning to future proof services

5.8 These recommendations are being progressed by the Director of Children and Families.

6. Bristol Operations Centre: Careline Audit Report (September 2022)

- 6.1 Bristol Operations Centre operates a 24/7 CCTV and Careline service. It is the first point of contact for the City's out of hours assistance and emergency services. Developed for the Bristol City Council as part of their Smart City programme, the connected operations centre is designed to provide integrated, city-wide management and coordinated service delivery.
- 6.2 CCTV and Careline services are co-located within a secure environment. The Team is led by the Operations Centre Manager and Team Leaders, working alongside IT. The team of Emergency Operators are multi-skilled and perform high level functions within the Centre across both CCTV and Careline Monitoring services. Emergency Operators are licensed under the Security Industry Authority and police vetted. There are also dedicated CCTV Officers and Careline Operators within the structure.
- 6.3 There have been no major incidents relating to Careline reported since the last Audit and no reported data breaches.
- 6.4 The Auditor was able to verify evidence through a pre-audit review of relevant and well-structured documentation and from additional information provided in conversation with the Operations Centre Manager and colleagues.
- 6.5 Bristol City Council is a nationally recognised Telecare Service Provider. The team operates a 24/7 service, sharing some specialist resources across Careline and CCTV. Their aim is to support customer needs and deliver a quality service. The team are Assistive Technology "champions" for Bristol City, sharing their knowledge of TEC across the Council and with health and social care.
- 6.6 The council has connections with circa 19,000 households/schemes and numbers are steadily increasing each year, having taken on the monitoring of additional supported living schemes for a national housing provider this year.
- 6.7 Telecare services are provided to a range of users including Social Landlords; Health and Social Care; Charities; private customers as well as Bristol City Council tenants.
- 6.8 In the year to March 2022 the council responded to over a quarter of a million calls; 97.93% of calls were answered within one minute; 99.77% of calls were answered within three minutes.
- 6.9 The Auditor recommended that Bristol Operations Centre: Careline is granted certification (or granted continued certification) to the Quality Standards Framework.

7. Joint area SEND revisit in Bristol (October 2022)

- 7.1 Between 4 and 6 October 2022, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) revisited the area of Bristol to decide whether sufficient progress has been made in addressing each of the areas of significant weakness detailed in the inspection report letter published on 13 November 2019.

7.2 As a result of the findings of the initial inspection and in accordance with the Children Act 2004 (Joint Area Reviews) Regulations 2015, His Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) determined that a written statement of action was required because of significant areas of weakness in the area's practice. HMCI determined that the local authority and the area's clinical commissioning group(s) (CCG) were jointly responsible for submitting the written statement to Ofsted. This was declared fit for purpose on 19 March 2020.

7.3 Ofsted found that the area has made sufficient progress in addressing four of the significant weaknesses identified at the initial inspection. The area has not made sufficient progress in addressing one significant weakness.

7.4 Summary of the main findings:

- i. The lack of accountability of leaders at all levels, including school leaders. Finding: The area has made sufficient progress in addressing this significant weakness.
- ii. The inconsistencies in the timeliness and effectiveness of the local area's arrangements for the identification and assessment of children and young people with SEND. Finding: The area has made sufficient progress in addressing this significant weakness.
- iii. The dysfunctional EHC plan process, and inadequate quality of EHC plans. Finding: The area has made sufficient progress in addressing this significant weakness.
- iv. The underachievement and lack of inclusion of children and young people with SEND, including the high rates of persistent absenteeism and fixed-term exclusions. Finding: The area has made sufficient progress in addressing this significant weakness.
- v. The fractured relationships with parents and carers, lack of co-production and variable engagement and collaboration. Finding: The area has not made sufficient progress in addressing this significant weakness.

7.5 The inspection was led by one of His Majesty's Inspectors from Ofsted, an Ofsted Inspector and a Children's Services Inspector from CQC.

7.6 Inspectors spoke with children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), parents and carers, and local authority and National Health Service (NHS) officers. Inspectors looked at a range of information about the performance of the area in addressing the five significant weaknesses identified at the initial inspection, including the area's improvement plans and self-evaluation.

7.7 In reaching their judgements, inspectors took account of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on SEND arrangements in the area. Inspectors considered a range of information about the impact of the pandemic and explored how the area's plans and actions had been adapted as a result.

7.8 Ofsted found the area has made sufficient progress in addressing four of the five

significant weaknesses identified at the initial inspection. As not all the significant weaknesses have improved, it is for the DfE and NHS England to determine the next steps. Ofsted and CQC will not carry out any further revisit unless directed to do so by the Secretary of State.

7.9 The findings from this Ofsted Inspection will be progressed by the Executive Director for Children and Education.

8. Annual independent electrical contractor capability inspection carried out by the NICEIC (October 2022)

8.1 An inspection was carried out on 25th October 2022. The inspection was successful.

9. Corporate Parenting Peer Diagnostic (November 2022)

9.1 This diagnostic is part of a wider package of support to develop the effectiveness of the Corporate Parenting Board. The package includes peer interviews with key officers and councillors to understand the approach to corporate parenting. A Corporate Parenting Board observation. Development of key areas and aspects for improvement. A bespoke development programme for the corporate parenting board.

9.2 The peer challenge focused on the following three areas:

- i. To what extent is Corporate Parenting embedded in the DNA of our council and in the approach of our city leadership?
- ii. To what extent is Corporate Parenting embedded in the DNA of our council and in the approach of our city leadership? How can we increase children and young people's participation and co-production?
- iii. To what extent is Corporate Parenting embedded in the DNA of our council and in the approach of our city leadership?

9.3 How well is corporate parenting embedded in Bristol: With regards to the first area of focus regarding whether Corporate Parenting was embedded into the council and wider city leadership, the peer challenge team found an impressive strategic framework in place – the Belonging Strategy and underpinning plans, including the Corporate Parenting Strategy. Some departments beyond Children's Services demonstrate an understanding of the principles of corporate parenting ('good enough for my child'). Examples of good opportunities for children looked after and care leavers (discounted access / free membership of sports and leisure facilities, establishing the EPIC charity). Partners are working flexibly to meet the needs of children looked after and their carers. Transformation and Invest to Save plans are in place to protect and improve children's services at a time of financial challenge.

9.4 The peer challenge team recommended that the council considers whether corporate parenting is primarily being driven by Children's Services and whether a 'whole council' approach is in place. The peers challenge team suggested that opportunities for work

experience / apprenticeships for children looked after / care leavers are not yet well developed beyond Children's Services. The peer challenge team also found that the range of offers to enable children looked after / care leavers and their carers to access services are not fully developed and shared. Additionally, the peer challenge team found Councillors beyond members of Corporate Parenting (CP) Panel appear to have limited engagement with or ownership of the corporate parenting agenda.

9.5 The views and experiences of children and young people: the peer challenge team found the following strengths:

- i. A range of mechanisms exist to seek and act upon the views of children and young people, including those in the care system, care leavers and asylum seekers
- ii. Active feedback is given to children and young people the council has engaged with (you said, we did) and a child centred organisational culture is evident
- iii. Dedicated participation worker capacity in place
- iv. Shadow Corporate Parenting Panel established and available to support the work of the CP Panel

9.6 The peer challenge team also identified the following areas for consideration:

- i. The Shadow Corporate Parenting Panel lacks an effective mechanism to contribute to the work of the CP Panel
- ii. There appears to be limited opportunities for a wider group of senior council managers to engage with children in care and care leavers
- iii. Feedback in response to the voice of children and young people from partners is not as well developed

9.7 Effectiveness of the Corporate Parenting Panel: the peer challenge team found the following strengths:

- i. Cross party representation and engagement from councillors on the Panel
- ii. A range of partners are represented on the Panel and through regular attendance to present reports to the Panel
- iii. The work of the Panel is supported by strong attendance by officers and the preparation of detailed reports
- iv. Members are prepared to critically challenge and debate officer presentations

9.8 The peer challenge team also identified the following areas for consideration:

- i. Long agendas to simply receive reports for noting on a regular cycle, limited time for effective discussion and collective ownership
- ii. Apparent reluctance for officers to present 'bad news' or highlight poor performance – emphasis on the positives in presentation, rather than how we can work with the Panel to solve a problem.
- iii. Officer operational group – does not yet appear to be functioning. This could be a driver for delivery and ensuring that CP Panel gets consistent data.
- iv. Current panel membership and ways of working does not draw on full range of expertise across the council and partnership.

9.9 The findings and observations from this peer challenge are being progressed by the Director of Children and Families.

10. TRADA fire door accreditation (November 2022)

10.1 Annual independent fire door installation and maintenance accreditation inspection carried out by TRADA in November 2022.

10.2 A strong display of carrying out remedial works to fire doorsets was shown by the certified fire doors maintainer.

10.3 All the reviewed documentations were found to be suitable, sufficient and as per requirements.

10.4 Based on the inspections, the council's fire door maintainer was recommended for continued certification.