

Cabinet

1 November 2016



Report Title: Bristol Children's Services Improvement Plan – Year 2

Ward: All wards

Strategic Director: John Readman, Strategic Director, People

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Purpose of the report:

This report presents Bristol Children's Services Improvement Plan – Year 2 for approval.

Recommendation for the Mayor's approval:

- 1. To approve the draft Children's Services Improvement Plan – Year 2.**
- 2. To endorse cross-Council support to deliver Improvement Plan priorities and corporate parenting responsibilities.**

The proposal:

1. Introduction

- 1.1 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.
- 1.2 '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".
- 1.3 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.
- 1.4 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.
- 1.5 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. The Improvement Plan is aligned with the Council's new Corporate Strategy which is currently under consultation, and will deliver key outcomes within it.

2. How have we done?

- 2.1 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.
- 2.2 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.

- 2.3 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.
- 2.4 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.
- 2.5 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.

3. Bristol Children’s Services Improvement Plan – Year 2

- 3.1 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.
- 3.2 The Bristol Children’s Services Improvement Plan – Year 2 (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.
- 3.3 The Year 1 Plan focused 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.

- 3.4 In order to develop improvement priorities, the Improvement Board reviewed a comprehensive information summary, which draws upon a variety of sources. This included demographic information, benchmarking of social work caseloads and performance data with Statistical Neighbours, audit findings, and staffing information. Key findings include:
- The number of children living in Bristol increased by 11,500 (14.3%) in the ten years to 2014, three times faster than national average. This is projected to grow by a further 16,744 (18%) by 2034.
 - Children in Need (CIN) numbers are decreasing and in line with Statistical Neighbours.
 - The number of Children subject of a Child Protection (CP) Plan has increased by 95 (23%) between 2014 and 2016.
 - There is a decreasing rate of children in care per 10k children, against a national rise and below statistical neighbours.
 - The majority of benchmarked performance data is in line with Statistical Neighbours. Key outliers that the Plan responds to include, the length of CIN and CP plans, children in care with up to date health and dental checks, and the numbers of children in care with convictions.
 - A 29% increase in area social worker caseloads in the year to March 2016. The average caseload per social worker is higher than statistical neighbour and England averages.
- 3.5 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.
- 3.6 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.
- 3.7 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.
- 3.8 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.

3.9 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.

4. Implementing the Year 2 Plan

4.1 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.

4.2 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 (including Cabinet Member for People) and partners via existing arrangements.

Consultation and scrutiny input:

a. Internal consultation:

All lead officers and teams that contribute to the Improvement Plan.

The Improvement Plan was reviewed by People Scrutiny Commission on 26 September 2016.

b. External consultation:

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.

Other options considered:

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 management / assessment:

FIGURE 1							
The risks associated with the implementation of the (subject) decision :							
No.	RISK Threat to achievement of the key objectives of the report	INHERENT RISK (Before controls)		RISK CONTROL MEASURES Mitigation (ie controls) and Evaluation (ie effectiveness of mitigation).	CURRENT RISK (After controls)		RISK OWNER
		Impact	Probability		Impact	Probability	
		1	Improvement Plan targets are not delivered		High	Medium	

				reports and monthly activity briefings.			
2	Improvement plan actions / targets are not owned and align with operation plans	Medium	Medium	Plan developed and agreed with lead officers and used to inform service plans.	Low	Low	Project Manager, Children's Services Improvement Plan.
3	Improvement Plan does not respond to emerging risks and improvement priorities	Medium	Medium	Improvement Board can accommodate changes via change control and review process	Low	Low	Project Manager, Children's Services Improvement Plan.

FIGURE 2

The risks associated with **not** implementing the *(subject) decision*:

No.	RISK Threat to achievement of the key objectives of the report	INHERENT RISK (Before controls)		RISK CONTROL MEASURES Mitigation (ie controls) and Evaluation (ie effectiveness of	CURRENT RISK (After controls)		RISK OWNER
		Impact	Probability		Impact	Probability	
1	Gaps against Inspection frameworks are not understood or acted upon. Improvement work is not coordinated and its impact is not understood	High	High	Without Improvement Plan and Board, Directorate Leadership Team would respond on an issue by issue basis	High	Medium	Strategic Director, People.

Public sector equality duties:

Before making a decision, section 149 of the 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 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.

The nature of this work does not require an equality impact assessment. A full equality impact assessment will be produced and used for any material changes to services for vulnerable children, their families, and carers.

Eco impact assessment

The significant impacts of this proposal are:

- No changes are proposed that would be likely to increase travel or the use of buildings & associated resources

The proposals include the following measures to mitigate the impacts:

- Increased ICT provision provides for flexible working, which may reduce staff travel

The net effects of the proposals are:

Overall, no significant environmental impacts are anticipated from this proposal

Resource and legal implications:

Finance

a. Financial (revenue) implications:

Delivering year two of the Children's Service Improvement plan is forecast to cost £194k in 2016/17. There is budget identified in the current approved budget to fund the one-off costs of delivering this project.

There is no on-going finance commitment in the proposals in the report beyond 2016/17.

Advice given by Michael Pilcher / Finance Business Partner

Date 20/09/2016

b. Financial (capital) implications:

No Capital Implications

Advice given by Michael Pilcher / Finance Business Partner

Date 20/09/2016

Comments from the Corporate Capital Programme Board:

Not applicable.

c. Legal implications:

The recommendations in the report are lawful and follow on from the original requirement to publish a statement under the Education and Inspection Act 2006 following the Ofsted inspection in 2014.

Local Authorities have the following Statutory child protection and safeguarding duties:

Children Act 1989

- to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need in their area and promote upbringing with their families by providing a range and level of services appropriate to those children's needs
- to provide accommodation for children in need where parents unable to do so for whatever reason.
- to provide placements which best meets the Child's needs
- to secure sufficient accommodation in its area to accommodate and meet the needs of the children it looks after.
- to investigate to see what action should be taken to safeguard a child who is suffering or may suffer significant harm.
- to take action to safeguard or promote the child's welfare when such action is required – this could be through for example, Emergency Protection Orders, Care or Supervision orders, Secure accommodation, Wardship, FGM protection orders, Forced marriage protection orders.

Children Act 2004

- To promote co-operation between agencies to improve the wellbeing of children in its area, including protection from harm and neglect.
- To ensure that its functions are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote welfare of children.
- To establish Local Safeguarding Children's Board to co-ordinate actions to promote welfare of children across agencies in its area and to audit compliance

In relation to educational achievement:

- to appoint at least one person to discharge the local authority's duty to promote the educational achievement of its looked after children, wherever they live or are educated.
- To ensure its officers work together to ensure that - except in an emergency - appropriate education provision for a child is arranged at the same time as a care placement.
- To ensure all looked after children have a Personal Education Plan (PEP) which is part of the child's care plan or detention placement plan.

The Children and Social Work Bill will introduce further duties in respect of:

- Corporate parenting principles in relation to Looked after children and care leavers will go from guidance to statutory duty:
 - to act in the best interests, and promote the health and well-being, of those children and young people;
 - to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings;
 - to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people;
 - to help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners;
 - to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people;
 - for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work;
 - to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.
- Offer to care leavers including promoting educational achievement.

Advice given by Nancy Rollason, Service Manager (People) and Interim Deputy Monitoring Officer
Date 18th October 2016

d. Land / property implications:

There are no land / property implications arising from this report.

e. Human resources implications:

There are a number of workforce issues that have had a negative impact on the stability of services offered within Children's Services. It is recognised that the issues faced in Bristol are not unique as there is a

National shortage of experienced and qualified Social Workers. As a result we are all working very closely with neighbours, partners and each other to try to address the challenges this brings.

As well as implementing a Recruitment & Retention workgroup within Bristol, we also started working with our regional neighbours to try to manage temporary Social Worker pay, as this was having a negative impact on our permanent workforce with people leaving to be paid more money by an agency. We now have the Memorandum of Co-operation in place which agrees a capped level of pay for social workers at all levels. It has been in place since 1st June and we will have our first quarterly monitor back at the end of September to establish how effective it is being. It is hoped that the agency staff will start to come back to permanent employment as their rates of pay will be capped as a result of the agreement.

We are also looking at ways to attract out of area Social Workers to come to work in the South West, we are currently developing a joint database of regional vacancies which demonstrates all the different benefits of living in the South West, from vibrant cities to beautiful coastlines, we hope that what we offer will help to recruit more social workers into the region.

Within the City, the workgroup have worked hard to review all the job paperwork and to review and refresh the selection process, so it is relevant and fit for purpose. All relevant managers have been trained in the new way of selection and recruitment, although take up has been poor. This supports the new Career Progression Programme which we worked on with Unions and managers across Children's and Adults, to agree a clear and consistent career pathway for all social workers.

We don't have as big a problem as other areas with high use of agency workers, however where we do have long term agency workers we are working with Guidant and managers to try to convert them to permanent employees.

The use of exit interviews has increased and we are now able to establish why people are leaving and can take positive action to reduce the impact in the future. We need to keep ensuring managers do these as it is a very valuable source of information we can use to reduce turnover.

Advice given by **Lorna Laing, HR Business Partner – People**
Date **19 September 2016**

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 – Year 2

Access to information (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](#)

