

CABINET

18 November 2014

Title: Children's Social Care Annual Report 2013/14	
Report of the Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care	
Open Report	For Information
Wards Affected: All	Key Decision: No
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Accountable Divisional Director: Ann Graham, Divisional Director Complex Needs and Social Care	
Accountable Corporate Director: Helen Jenner, Corporate Director, Children's Services	
Summary: <p>This report provides Cabinet with a review of operational service developments and inspections over the 2013/14 financial year within the Complex Needs and Social Care Division within Children's Services, as well as an overview of the local demand pressures and sets out the outcomes of the Ofsted inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers, which took place in May 2014. The report also provides the outcomes of the LSCB review undertaken by Ofsted at the same time as the inspection of services for children in need of help and protection; children looked after and care leavers. The areas for improvement are highlighted and the Barking and Dagenham Local Authority action plan and the LSCB action plan in response to the Ofsted inspection are attached in Appendix 1.</p> <p>The reports provides an update on the successful launch of the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) on 1 April 2014 based in Barking, including the police service, health partners, housing, youth offending service and probation, education and social care.</p> <p>The report also sets out the work of the Barking and Dagenham Safeguarding Children Board in 2013/14.</p> <p>An analysis and more specific details regarding the Council's looked after children's population, including some key areas of performance which has resulted in a period of increased stability is provided and the report also discusses pressures and priorities for the future.</p> <p>In particular, the report shares with Councillors the increased focus upon a) the findings of the BAAF Adoption Diagnostic and Ofsted inspection outcomes on adoption and b) the timeliness of the adoption process. An update on our current corporate parenting arrangements is also provided framed within the area for improvement in the OFSTED inspection.</p>	

Recommendation(s)

The Cabinet is asked to note:

- (i) The service improvements contained within this review report and action taken in response to local demand pressures; and
- (ii) The content and outcomes of the Ofsted inspection of services for children in need, looked after children, care leavers and the Local Authority Children's Services' Improvement Plan.

Reason(s)

To assist the Council in achieving its Vision and priorities, particularly in relation to "Enabling social responsibility".

1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 The Complex Needs and Social Care Division comprises of four integrated service areas each with a Group Manager lead, namely:
 - MASH and Assessment Service;
 - Care Management Service;
 - Looked After Children Service, and
 - Disabled Children and Special Educational Needs Service.
- 1.2 The Division has operational responsibility for all Child Protection and Looked after Children services. Responsibility also includes Special Educational Needs (SEN) services in response to the government's Children & Families Bill and in particular the need for local authorities to plan and implement a more integrated assessment and support process for families who care for children with disabilities from the 1st September 2014.
- 1.3 In February 2014, a new permanent Divisional Director of Complex Needs and Social Care joined the borough and both she and the Division are committed to:
 - Improving services and outcomes for vulnerable children, young people and their families.
 - Earlier intervention and prevention through our own Prevention Service and via close operational relationships with colleagues providing targeted and universal support.
 - Reducing the numbers of children in care.
 - Minimising the duration of Child Protection Plans.
 - Strong means of engagement with young people and their families so that they can 'shape' future services.

2. Safeguarding Demand

2.1 This section of the report provides a high level summary of the key data trends in 2013/14, as well as providing some historical data to demonstrate increased year on year demand.

2.2 Alongside rapid children population growth, the borough has experienced an increase in safeguarding and looked after children numbers. 2013/14 was another very busy year in social care with the number of contacts made to statutory social care increasing to 8,856 compared to 8,363 in the previous year. The number of contacts progressing to a referral has also increased rising to 3,126 in 2013/14 compared with 2,586 in 2012/13 and 1,812 in 2011/12, a real term increase of 73% in two years (figure 1.0). Barking and Dagenham's referral rate per 10,000 children aged 0-17 has consequently risen to 568 compared to 470 in 2011/12, in line with the national rate, but still below similar areas (693).

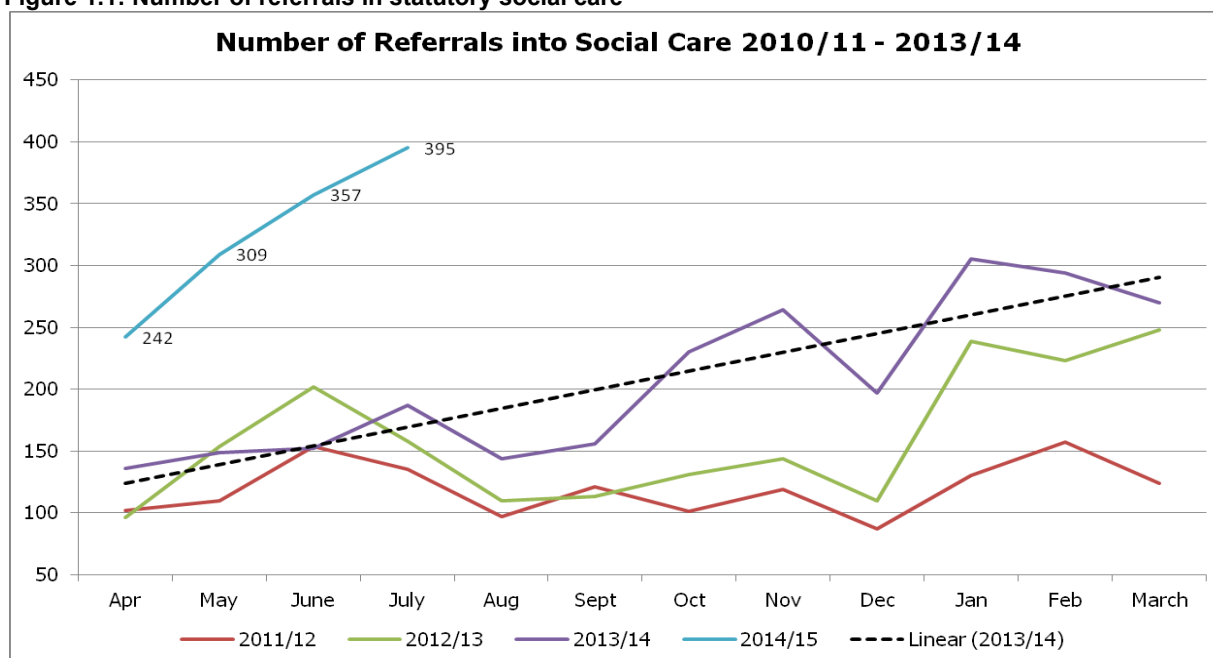
Figure 1.0: Contacts and referrals to statutory social care

	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Number of contacts received (including multiple contacts on a child)	6,913	9,953	14,833	9,765	8,683	8,363	8,856
Number of referrals	1,091	3,000	3,043	2,704	1,812	2,586	3,126
Referral Rate per 10,000	225	650	632	546	337	470	568

Source: ICS, London Borough of Barking and Dagenham

2.3 Between January and March 2014, as was the case in 2013, referrals to statutory social care were very high and above average; 305, 294 and 270 respectively compared to a monthly average of 207 over the year. Figure 1.1 shows the monthly referral trends in the last three years, including up to July 2014. Over 50% of all contacts made to statutory social care with regards to children progressed to a statutory referral in May and June 2014 – nearly 60% in July, which is way above the borough's average conversion rate of around 29%.

Figure 1.1: Number of referrals in statutory social care



- 2.4 This trend is continuing in this financial year as the number of referrals has significantly increased in May – July 2014 to 309, 357 and 395 respectively, again way above the local average, adding to the demand and pressure experienced by the social care service.
- 2.5 As a consequence of population growth and increased demand in the contact, referral and assessment service, the total number of children receiving a statutory social care service has also increased significantly. In 2013/14, 2,183 children and young people were open to social care compared to 1,482 in 2009/10, representing a real term increase of 48% over a 5 year period. This growth is higher than the overall growth in the children population of around 30%. The rate of open social care cases per 10,000 has risen to 397 but despite the increase still remains lower than that found in similar areas (486) although higher than national and London.

Figure 1.2 Number of open social care cases and rate per 10,000

	LBBB 2009/10	LBBB 2010/11	LBBB 2011/12	LBBB 2012/13	LBBB 2013/14	% change over 1 year	% change over 5 years	SN Average 12/13	London Average 12/13	National Average 12/13
Number of open social care cases	1482	1545	1714	2161	2184	1%	48%	n/a	n/a	n/a
Open cases rate per 10,000	320	342	344	393	397	1%	24%	486	314	332

- 2.6 The overall increase in referral activity has created pressures within our Triage and Assessment Service and has also impacted upon caseloads within our longer-term Care Management Teams. The increase in activity and caseloads is also illustrated by the number of more detailed assessments completed within the service (the majority within the Triage and Assessment Team). At the end of March 2014, **2,817** statutory social care assessments had been undertaken, compared to **2,016 in 2012/13. This represents an increase of 40%**. This increase in activity is also illustrated in the number of Section 47 Child Protection investigations initiated across the year; **1,231** for the year 2013/14 compared to **689** for the previous year – **which is an increase of 79%**.

Children on child protection plans, 2013/14

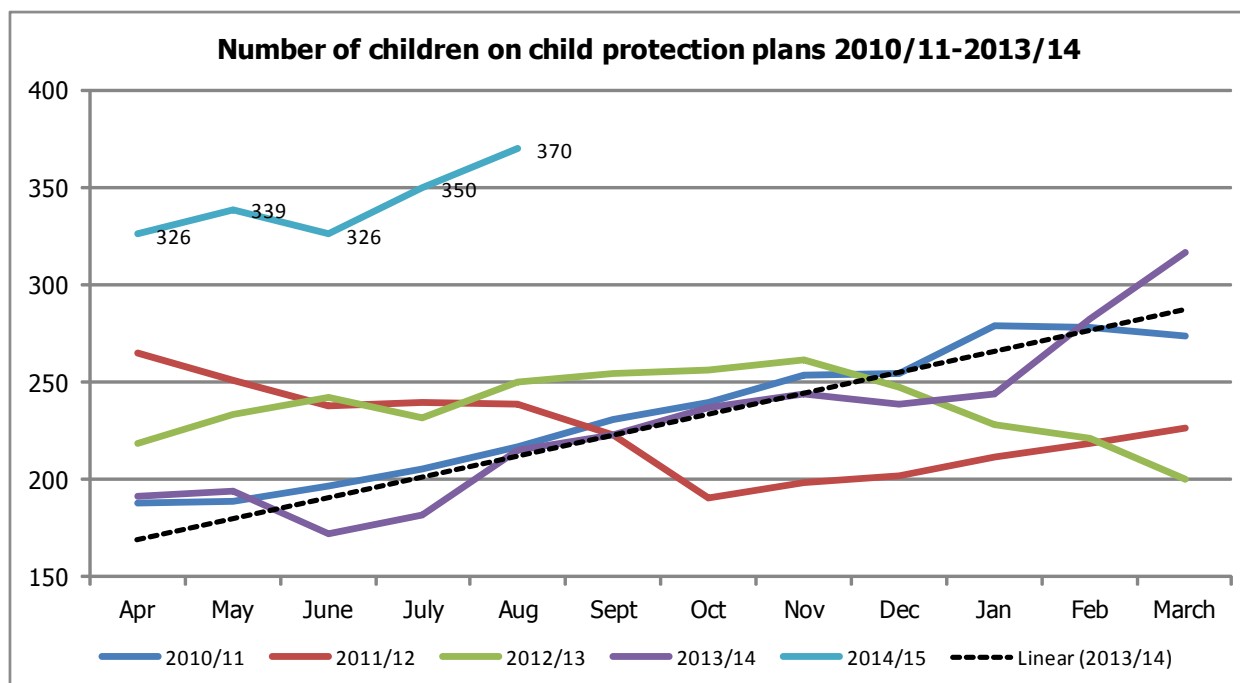
- 2.7 In 2013/14, the number of children subject to child protection plans (CPPs) has increased considerably to 318 compared to 200 in 2012/13, a real term increase of 59%. The rate per 10,000 has increased to 58 and is now more in line with our statistical neighbours but higher than national and London rates. In total, 433 new child protection plans were initiated with 314 child protection plans ceasing in 2013/14, a higher number compared to previous years. This increase reflects the population growth and increasing demand and complexity of social care cases in the borough (Figure 1.3 and 1.4). The number of children on child protection plans is continuing to rise and increased to 326 in Q1 2014/15.

Figure 1.3: Number of children and young people with a child protection plan (CPP)

	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Number of children subject to a child protection plan	167	199	274	227	200	318
Total number of new CPP	226	205	249	226	276	433
Total number of ceased CPP	226	173	174	274	302	314
Number of children subject to a CPP per 10,000 children	39	43	55	42	36	58

Source: London Borough of Barking and Dagenham

Figure 1.4



2.8 The majority of referrals relate to younger children aged 0 – 5 and this reflects the rapid demographic change within the Borough, as well as the pressures experienced in more universal settings such as schools, primary health care services etc. There is also a change in the ethnicity of children requiring support which again is a reflection of the demographic change within the borough. In the main, the predominant child protection issues the service is currently managing relate to emotional abuse and the impact upon children where domestic violence is a factor within the household. In 2013/14, the proportion of children subject to child protection plans due to emotional abuse considerably increased to 69% compared to 55% in 2012/13.

2.9 The numbers demonstrate that the service has continued to experience high demand in 2013/14 as was the case in 2012/13, indicating the increase in activity appears to be more of a trend than a 'blip'. The rapid child population growth, and increases in numbers of vulnerable families, is placing unprecedented pressure on children's social care teams. In response to this, the Corporate Director of Children's Services commissioned a detailed review of Children's Social Care provision, produced in December 2013 and presented to the Leader of the Council, the Chief Executive and Cabinet. The review set out new models for the Assessment and Care Management Service, the Disabled Children's Team (DCT),

the Child Protection Reviewing Service (CPRS) and the Fostering and Adoption Service designed to address the increased population and need and aimed at establishing a permanent structure, which has the capacity to grow as the population grows.

- 2.10 The new model and the required growth in budgets were agreed by the Council and an extra £2.7million has been invested to children's social care. A social care redesign project group was set up in March 2014 and a detailed project plan monitored by the CS transformation board (see section for details) to implement the new model and to recruit permanent social workers across the service. A schedule of recruitment drives have been planned across the year with a view to the recruitment of a) valued locum staff currently working within the division and b) experienced staff to assist with the current pressures.
- 2.11 A main priority is to reduce the use of agency staff across the service as our numbers are still very high (46% as at the end of March 2014) impacting negatively on the budget. This is because additional resources above establishment have been agreed to assist with the increase in workload within the Assessment and Care Management teams in the last two years. This has assisted the Assessment and Care Management Teams and caseloads have become more manageable but still remain too high (above the agreed 20 in all teams apart CMT C (19) as at the end of March 2014) due to the demand not abating.

3. Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

- 3.1 Over the past year, plans have progressed well for our own local multi agency safeguarding hub (MASH). On the 1st April 2014, Barking and Dagenham successfully launched its MASH. This saw partners from Metropolitan Police, Social Care, Health, Education, Targeted Support, Housing, Youth Offending, Adult Mental Health, CAMHS and Probation come together to form a multi agency safeguarding hub. MASH is the borough's front door into Social Care and ensures that comprehensive risk assessments, with agency relevant input, result in families accessing the right level of support at the right time. Through co-locating partners from Early Help into our MASH and newly introduced case management systems, we are able to provide a seamless and timely interface for children and families with additional needs. Being able to draw upon the information and intelligence held by partner agencies within a secure information sharing environment, ensures that onward support provided by professionals is both suitable and well informed.
- 3.2 The approach has been strongly endorsed by OFSTED and 'The Munro Review of Child Protection'. The development of a local MASH has been encouraged across London and the service has contributed to the London-wide steering group charged with MASH implementation across the capital.
- 3.3 Whilst it is very early days for our MASH, initial performance at the front door and feedback from partner agencies has been positive. More information is being made available to ensure cases are safely stepped across to Early Help provision, or stepped up for onward statutory assessment. In the first quarter of MASH going live, 314 cases received a MASH investigation out of all contacts received into the front door. Of those, 80 cases were safely deescalated to Early Help provision that would have previously resulted in a statutory assessment.

3.4 An official launch of MASH involving the Local Authority and all partner agencies is planned for November 2014.

4. OFSTED inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers (May 2014)

4.1 This section of the report provides a summary of the key findings and outcomes of the Ofsted inspection of services for children in need, looked after children, care leavers. The inspection took place between 29 April to 22 May 2014 and the report was published on the 7 July 2014. Although this annual report related to the financial year of 2013/14, it is important to present Cabinet with the outcomes of the Ofsted inspection as this will drive the work and priorities of the Division in 2014/15 and beyond.

4.2 The inspection resulted in a 'requires improvement' grading for all judgements, as set out below from the Ofsted published report.

The overall judgement is requires improvement	
There are no widespread or serious failures that create or leave children being harmed or at risk of harm. The welfare of looked after children is safeguarded and promoted. However, the authority is not yet delivering good protection and help and care for children, young people and families.	
1. Children who need help and protection	requires improvement
2. Children looked after and achieving permanence	requires improvement
2.1 Adoption performance	requires improvement
2.2 Experiences and progress of care leavers	requires improvement
3. Leadership, management and governance	requires improvement
The effectiveness of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) is requires improvement The LSCB is not yet demonstrating the characteristics of good.	

4.3 The inspection focused on children who need help and protection, the experiences and progress of children looked after, including adoption, fostering, the use of residential care, and children who return home, the experiences and progress of care leavers and leadership and management of services. Although the overall judgement was requires improvement, a number of strengths were identified during the inspection as follows:

Strengths

- Early help services support large numbers of children and their families. Purposeful work with vulnerable families leads to improvements for most children, such as increasing school attendance and the early provision of support for very young children with additional needs.

- Social workers appropriately challenge parents of children who are the subject of a child protection plan if they do not engage with services. When families are not making the progress needed, decisive action is taken to protect the child, including escalation into public law and transition to a safe and settled future.
- Help and protection services are responsive to families' diverse needs. Inspectors saw examples of proactive, skilled social work sensitive to children's needs, giving parents a clear understanding of what is expected of them. Social workers are creative in the ways in which they engage and communicate with children. These include observations and other work with pre- or non-verbal children.
- The range of services targeted at children who are on the edge of care are effective and make a positive difference in many individual cases. Family group conferencing supports children and families well.
- When needed, legal and social care services work constructively and effectively together at all stages. The average duration of care proceedings within the family court is improving, despite an increase in the number of proceedings.
- Assessment and support for carers is of a high quality, meaning that children can be placed safely with skilled and well supported carers. Placements are well supported by the local authority, resulting in positive attachments and high levels of stability. The use of special guardianship has increased and there is a low rate of placement disruption.
- Case conferences and other formal meetings are effective in ensuring the engagement and participation of families. Parents' attendance at conferences is good and their feedback is routinely collected. Almost all parents told inspectors that they had been helped to understand the concerns for their child.
- Agencies share information quickly and effectively to make sure those children at risk of child sexual exploitation and those who go missing from home, care or education get a well-co-ordinated response.
- The Adoption Panel is well managed and chaired, supported by a stable and experienced adoption team. Post-adoption support is also strength and is valued by those who have used the service.
- Care Leavers feel well supported and prepared for independence by their allocated workers. Young people report that training programmes are valued and the service overall is very accessible and welcoming.
- Leaders have a clear picture of the current pressures faced by front-line practitioners. Strategic bodies, such as the Children's Trust and the Health and Wellbeing Board, have a shared understanding of these pressures. Extra staffing has been recently agreed to help children's social care meet its responsibilities.
- The Local Safeguarding Children's Board learning and improvement framework has developed good communication from front line practitioners across the key agencies. This is an effective approach to understanding what is happening on the ground.

4.4 Ofsted also identified the following **13 areas for improvement**:

- Ensure that sufficient checks and enquiries are undertaken before any unplanned removal of children from their families. This concerns the

exercise of police powers of protection. This was an area for improvement in the last inspection.

- Improve the quality of referrals to children's social care by partner agencies to ensure that timely and appropriate decisions are based on all relevant information.
- Ensure that child protection strategy discussions are focused on all children in families, are clearly recorded, have engagement from all relevant agencies and identify clear and achievable outcomes.
- Ensure that all key information is shared and considered at initial and subsequent child protection conferences through regular attendance by all key agencies.
- Ensure that assessments include children's wishes and feelings; provide a thorough consideration of parenting difficulties, their impact on the child, and a full analysis of risk.
- Ensure that all children are seen in a timely manner, assessments are timely and thorough, and written plans consider all areas of need and identify the outcomes sought.
- Introduce a permanency policy that emphasises parallel planning from the earliest point when children become looked after, as well as tracking of the timescales for individual children with a plan for adoption.
- Further develop consultation arrangements for children in care, including through increased representation of looked after children in the children in care group.
- Improve the quality of planning towards adulthood for those leaving care, with a greater focus on those not in education, employment or training, or with other vulnerabilities.
- Continue to improve the opportunities for young adults leaving care to continue living with their carers as part of 'staying put' arrangements.
- Develop and implement medium and long-term strategic service plans that fully take account of known and estimated increases in amount and type of demand for the whole range of services for vulnerable children.
- Strengthen management oversight, including oversight of plans by conference chairs and independent reviewing officers, as well as formal social worker supervision, to reduce drift or delay in assessments.
- Ensure that corporate parenting responsibilities are fully understood by elected members to achieve greater awareness and accountability across the local authority.

4.5 The areas for improvement have been incorporated into a detailed Local Authority improvement plan, which is set out in Appendix 1 for Cabinet review. The Local Authority is required to submit this improvement plan to Ofsted within 70 working days of the inspection report publication, which is the 10th October 2014. The Ofsted action plan will be monitored and evaluated by the Children's Services Inspection Board, which has representation from the LA and partner agencies i.e. Health and Police. Quarterly progress reports will be delivered to the LSCB with six monthly reports to Cabinet, Health and Wellbeing Board, Children's Trust and Corporate Parenting Group.

5. Barking and Dagenham Safeguarding Board

- 5.1 The Barking and Dagenham Safeguarding Board produced its 8th Annual Report covering activity for the year 2013/14. The report reflects the changes in Working Together 2013, which requires all LSCBs to:
- Appoint an independent chair which is accountable to the CEO;
 - Publish an annual report, which reports on the effectiveness of child safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the local area;
 - Share learning from Serious Case Reviews; and
 - Share the annual report with the Chief Executive, Leader of the Council, the Local Police and Crime Commissioner and Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board.
- 5.2 The LSCB governance arrangements were reviewed in 2013/14 and the Board is compliant as required by Working Together 2013. The Safeguarding Board's Annual Report provides an overview of the Board's work in 2013/14 and priorities for 2014/15. The report continues to comment on the pressures experienced by all services as a consequence of the significant demographic growth in the children under 5 population, an issue which is also compounded by national welfare reforms. The national profile of the sexual exploitation of children missing / missing from care remains a particular priority for the Board and is an issue of heightened vigilance for all partners.
- 5.3 In May 2014, Ofsted undertook a review of the effectiveness of the local safeguarding children board as part of the inspection of services for children in need of help and protection; children looked after and care leavers. The LSCB was graded as "Requires Improvement". Areas of strength and areas for improvement were identified and an action has been developed in response to those areas for improvement (refer to Appendix 1). The areas for improvement are:
- Ensure the LSCB Chair strengthens the coordination, focus and impact of the boards work in the Health and Wellbeing Board;
 - Undertake an evaluation of the full impact of training on the performance of practitioners to ensure it targets improvements in outcomes for children;
 - Sustain and extend the positive and constructive role of the practitioners forums in promoting multi-agency working through improving the attendance of social workers;
 - Strengthen oversight of private fostering by the board, supporting efforts to ensure all such children are identified; and
 - Ensure the annual report and business plan are focused on understanding and addressing local needs and on evaluating progress made in achieving improved outcomes for children.

The inspection identified a number of strengths including:

- The LSCB operates in line with its statutory responsibilities. The Chair is suitably independent and uses this independence well to hold partners to account, for example through direct communication with the metropolitan police and crime commissioner, and with NHS England over a range of issues which have a potentially adverse impact on local safeguarding work.

- The Board's recent use of a structured development session between member agencies is a positive approach to tackling shared concerns. This is aimed at enabling agencies to work together to identify issues under a range of previously agreed themes (for example, 'pressures in the system') encouraging a more robust approach to problem-solving and forward planning. These discussions lead to an agreed action plan, and while it is too early to see impact from this, or how it will link with other existing priorities of the Board and other strategic planning arrangements, this is a positive approach that is being taken.
- The LSCB Chair promotes links between partnerships through membership of the Children's Trust, attending regularly, and feeding back on the work of the Board.
- However, the LSCB Chair is not a member of the Health and Wellbeing Board. This weakens the LSCB's link with and influence on the work of this body.
- The LSCB risk register provides a helpful and coordinated approach through collating and monitoring progress of the priority risk issues for each partner agency as well as shared ones. Detailed consideration of the issues facilitates a sustained focus on those issues most important to partners as well as in the identification of areas where partners should take action to support one another to improve outcomes. Key issues at the time of the inspection include the impact of health service changes, workforce difficulties and limits to commissioning capacity across several agencies. While the difficulties around the extent of exercise of police powers of protection and dwindling attendance at conferences have been escalated there remains no satisfactory outcome to these issues.
- The LSCB offers a wide range of relevant training for practitioners across the partnership. It also monitors training applications and attendance, identifying any trends in non-attendance. Immediate feedback from attendees is collated and reported to the board. This provides a picture of attendees' views on the value of training, facilitating the further development and tailoring of courses. There is, however, no evaluation of the longer-term impact of training on the practice of front line professionals and managers or on outcomes for children.
- The LSCB has established two multi-agency practitioners forums, that are well planned and offer front line practitioners a constructive opportunity for discussion and debate of current professional challenges. The results of these are feedback to the Board giving it a direct view of current practice and practitioners' views on improvement. However, the attendance of social workers at the forums has declined, reducing the effectiveness of this positive initiative

5.4 The LSCB recognises the need to have a more developed approach to how it measures the impact of learning and development across its multiagency training programme and will be working with the London Safeguarding Board to further develop this. As a partnership, the LSCB needs to strengthen how it demonstrates the impact of work with families and have more confidence in reporting this through the LSCB Annual Report. Following the inspection, the LSCB has developed an action plan to address the areas for improvement and will also be working alongside Children's Social Care to support and oversee the action plan from the single agency inspection

5.5 Priorities for 2014/15 include:-

- Implement and monitor progress against the OFSTED LSCB action plan;
- Embedding our strategic approach and the operational delivery of CSE and other forms of sexual abuse;
- LSCB partners to maintain a review of demographics and pressures within LBBB impacting on safeguarding children and work with strategic partners including HWBB, CSH and Children's Trust to influence commissioning and provision of services;
- Further develop the LSCB quality programme to gain greater assurance of practice across the LSCB partnership;
- Develop the practitioner forum to facilitate engagement of practitioners across the partnership with specific focus on social care practitioners;
- Work in partnership with the Adult Safeguarding Board to maximise opportunities to address agendas that impact on families and safeguarding children; and
- Strengthen community cohesion to safeguard children through working with voluntary and faith communities.

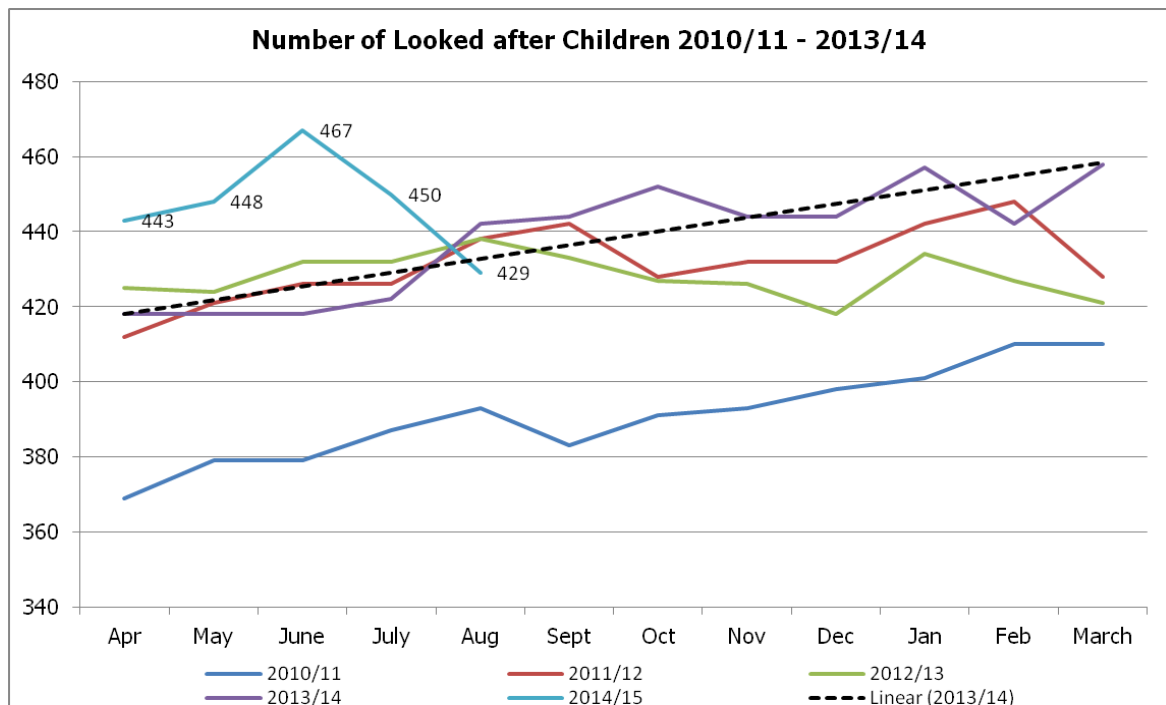
5.6 The Board's full report can be accessed via the BDSCB website.

6. Looked after Children Numbers

6.1 In 2013/14, the number of looked after children increased compared to a fall in the previous year. The borough had 458 looked after children at the end of March 2014 compared to 420 in 2012/13 and 427 in 2011/12. The borough's rate per 10,000 0-17 year olds increased to 83, but still remains lower than similar areas (91) but above national and London rates.

	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014
Number of Children In Care	427	420	458
Number in Residential Care	29	22	23
Number in LBBB Foster Care	242	248	261
<i>:of which in Borough</i>	110	113	118
<i>:of which out of Borough</i>	132	135	143
Number in Agency Foster Care	87	81	116
<i>:of which in Borough</i>	15	10	12
<i>:of which out Borough</i>	72	71	104
% of all CIC in Foster Care Placements	81.0%	81.7%	82.3%
Number of Private Fostering Arrangements	10	7	12

6.2 The profile across the year is illustrated in the graph below. Growth in looked after children numbers peak in January and March 2014, rising sharply in both months, which corresponds with a period of peak demand. 2014/15 monthly data up to August 2104 are also displayed on the graph to show the current trends in this financial year, which are demonstrating a fall at the end of August 2014 to 429.



6.3 In 2013/14, the increase in looked after children were managed effectively as placement stability remained very strong with fewer children moving 3 or more times. Ofsted noted during the single agency inspection in May 2014 that the borough's range of services targeted at children who are on the edge of care are effective and make a positive difference in many individual cases, for example Access to Resources Team and family group conferencing support children and families well. Our legal and social care services work well and effectively together at all stages. In 2013/14, the average duration of care proceedings within the family court is improving, despite an increase in the number of proceedings, representing good performance.

6.4 It is worth mentioning that the overall increase in looked after children needs to be considered in the context of the rapidly increasing local demographic, as well as the demand and pressures faced by social care. In this financial year, Q1 showed the same increasing trend, but the number of looked after children has now dropped to levels as seen in 2012/13.

7. Looked after Children Profile

7.1 The profile of the looked after children population remained reasonably static. The percentage of looked after children that were female slightly dropped to 51% in 2013/14 compared to 53% in 2012/13. The looked after children gender split has converged with the end of year split being 49% males and 51% females. Though this is still a little out when compared with the national position, it is very close to reflecting the proportionate split in the wider child population of the borough.

7.2 A 1% increase in children under 10 years old in care, a 1% reduction in 10 years+ when compared to 2012/13. Although slight this shift was the same in 2012/13 and is illustrative of the local demographic position and also reflects our robust

stance and interventions regarding the safeguarding of young vulnerable children within the Borough.

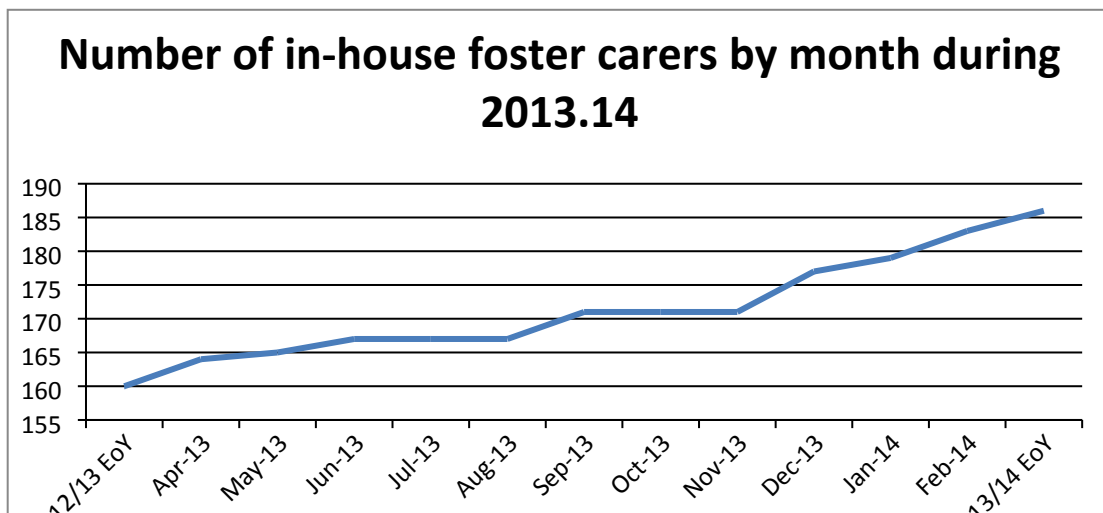
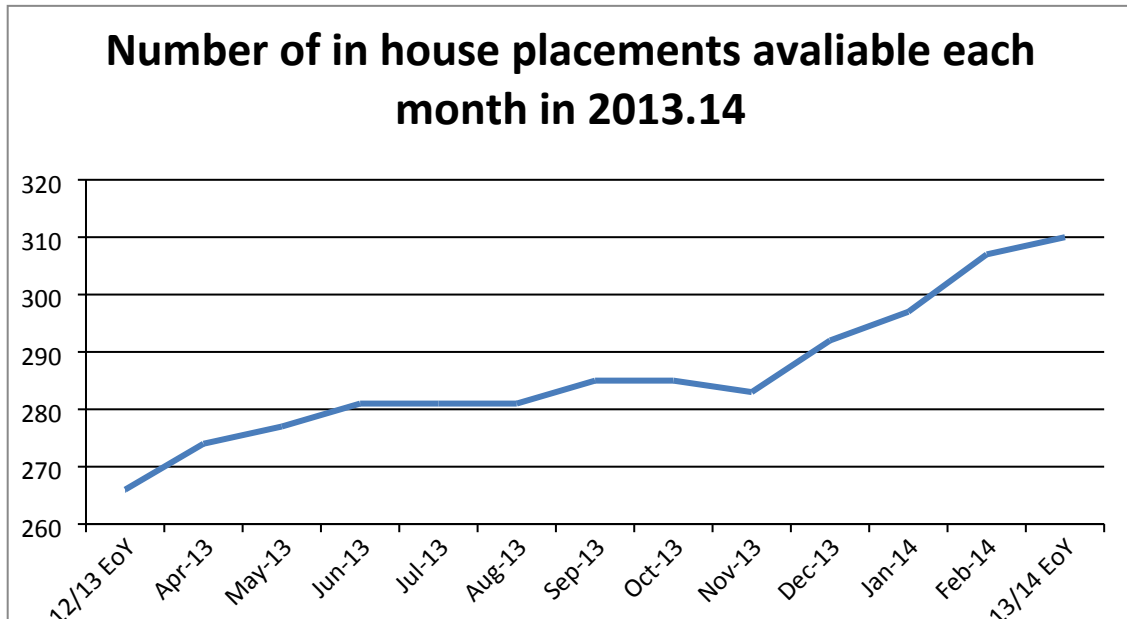
- 7.3 By ethnicity, compared to March 2013, populations remained reasonably stable other than a 3% reduction in Black African children being cared for by the Council. We have also noticed the beginnings of what we may see as a continuing trend of Eastern European families and particularly Lithuanian families, featuring in our care statistics.
- 7.4 Operational pressures have included a further increase in children entering care via Police Protection powers. In 2013/14, the number of children entering care on police protection increased to 136, representing 44% of all children entering care. This is significantly way above national, London and similar areas that all fall below 20%. Police protection levels, therefore, were a key line of enquiry area in the recent Ofsted inspection and resulted in an area for improvement, as was the case in the previous social care inspection in 2012.
- 7.5 In response, the service has re-established the collaborative work with the Police Service regarding this issue (both 'uniform' and Child Abuse Investigation Team elements of the Metropolitan Police) via six weekly meetings to discuss levels of Police Protection. A revised Police Protocol and Strategy have been produced and all children taken into care via police protection are audited in detail by the Quality Assurance Manager based in the Child Protection Reviewing Service. The audit findings and outcomes are discussed at the 6 weekly Police and Social Care meetings to ensure practice is reasonable and also to consider alternatives.
- 7.6 It is very good news to report early indications of impact with police protection numbers falling to 30 children between 1st April to end of August 2014, representing 33% of all children entering care. This is a reduction of 11% on end of year 2013/14 and compares very well to the same time period in 2013 where police protection numbers were much higher (52) at 40%.

Fostering Update

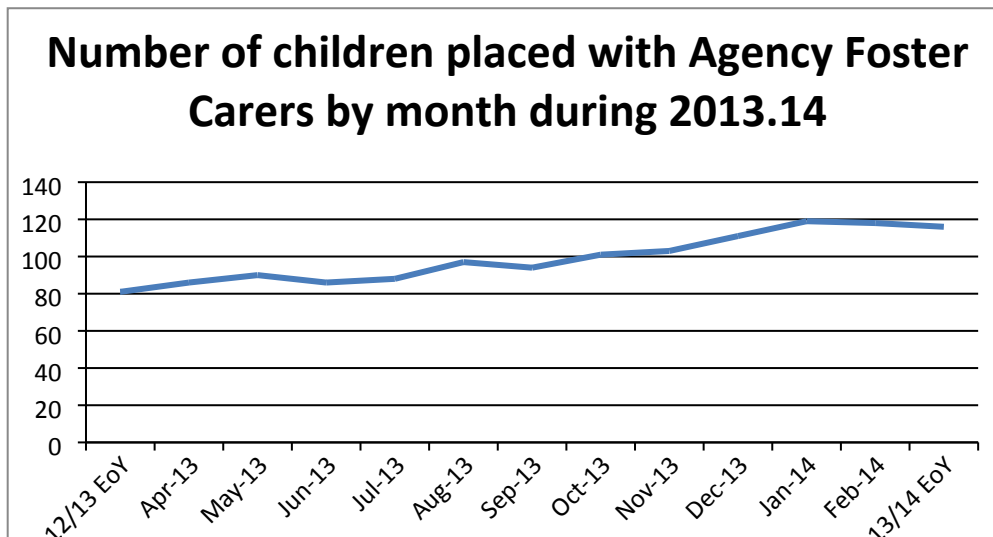
- 7.7 The Fostering Service consists of one team dedicated to all fostering activity including recruitment, assessment training, support to approved foster carers connected persons and private fostering. The performance of the Barking and Dagenham Fostering Service has made a huge contribution to some key areas of performance with regards to our looked after children population. As noted by OFSTED (May 2014) *"fostering recruitment campaigns have been continuous and effective, helping to ensure that looked after children are placed with local foster carers. Recruitment strategies are appropriately based on recently assessed need, with strong recruitment in adjoining boroughs. As at the end of March 2014, the service had recruited 186 fostering households, compared to 160 in March 2013. Those 186 households were able to offer 310 placements to Barking and Dagenham children, compared to 266 at March 2013. This is a net increase of 44 placements in the year, far in excess of the team target of a net increase of 20 carers for the year. The team's performance is in direct contrast to that of neighbouring boroughs who continue to struggle to recruit new, quality carers.*

Placement type

- 7.8 2013/14 showed a growth overall in use of foster care. 377 young people in care were cared for within in foster care placements, compared to 329 in 12/13. An increasing number of these placements have been with the borough's foster carers, which is much more cost effective.



- 7.9 In 2013/14, however, the use of Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) placements increased to 116 in March 2014 compared to 81 placements at March 2013. IFA placements frequently come with a cost premium so this increase in usage has had a negative impact upon the placements budget.



- 7.10 The Barking and Dagenham Pitstop Project (the LBBD specialist Multi-dimensional Treatment Foster Care (MTFC) scheme) was noted by Ofsted in the May inspection as an innovative project helping to support children to live in families, reducing the need for residential care. Inspectors reported that the scheme is proving to be highly effective in supporting stability, with almost all children remaining in their family settings several months after intervention. At end of year 2013/14, PITSTOP cared for another 8 young people. All these young people would require high cost residential placements if the Pitstop scheme were not be available and consequently the team continue to provide a high quality and highly valued service. It has been a successful year for the team. Over the past few months a number of children have completed the programme with their carers and have moved on to permanent in house local fostering families or stayed on long term with their Pitstop foster carers – all fantastic outcomes. The team continue to be very proud of theirs and their foster carers work and the way in which they have helped turned around the lives of these most troubled and damaged children and have prevented a potential pathway into institutional care, with all the associated poor outcomes young people subsequently experience.
- 7.11 Pitstop was accredited via the national MTFC support team and the university research team based in Oregon USA in 2012/13, a hugely significant achievement for the team. This success has continued in 2013/14 with Pitstop also celebrating being short listed in 3 categories of the Children and Young Peoples Now's national awards. PITSTOP were delighted when they were announced winner of 'Children Service of the Year' category. This is a hugely significant achievement for the team. Not only were they the first accredited programme for 7 to 11 year olds nationally, they were the first in Europe. The service is immensely proud of the team, their hard work and their commitment to young people and we can truly say that in Barking and Dagenham we have services that are amongst the best in Europe and one that this year has been nationally recognised through their Children and Young People Now award.
- 7.12 In 2103/14, the team received a number of enquiries from other local authorities regarding placement availability. Until now such a move has not been possible but at a time of fiscal reduction the team has worked hard and have made good progress towards financial sustainability and are currently assessing a child from another London Authority and have interest from two more, so hope to be in a

secure 'trading' position very soon with the sale of two, established specifically to 'sell', placements.

- 7.13 Usage of residential care remained relatively static between 2013 and 2014, rising by just one from 22 to 23. These high cost placements were monitored on a monthly basis with the former Children's Services Lead Member and the chair of the Members Corporate Parenting Group.
- 7.14 The table below offers some information regarding placement proximity to the Borough. Whilst an increasing percentage of looked after children are cared for by Borough carers, not all foster families reside within the Borough itself. This is largely an issue of housing stock; the Borough has a very large 'council housing stock' which does not lend itself to surplus bedrooms and sufficient space in general to be available to make fostering an option for prospective families, hence the need to recruit carers from beyond the borough boundaries. However, as the table illustrates, 'out of borough placements' are in the main within neighbouring boroughs or authorities within a short distance of B&D itself, ensuring that contact with professionals is easily maintained and that some services provided within the Borough are still accessed by young people who do not strictly reside with us. The successful recruitment of local foster carers has supported a reduction in the number of placements more than 20 miles from their home in recent years (**14% at end of March 2014 compared to 16% in 2012/13 and 19% in 2011/12**).
- 7.15 Our Participation and Engagement Team is a strong example of such work in action, working hard to maintain contact and engagement with young people wherever their placement settings may be. The service is particularly aware of the pressures experienced by schools in Kent due to the large numbers of looked after children placed in the county by London authorities in particular. Whilst our numbers of looked after children placed in Kent are relatively low, we have chosen to recruit a dedicated Advisory Teacher for such young people and for this teacher to be based in Kent and work closely with the schools providing education for LBBB looked after children placed in the county.

Local Authority	No. of YP's placed
LBBB	152
Havering	112
Redbridge	54
Essex	35
Kent	23
Thurrock	12
Placed for Adoption	10
Waltham Forest	8
Tower Hamlets	6
Hackney	5
Norfolk	5
Southend on Sea	5
Newham	4
Hampshire	3
Lancashire	3
Birmingham	2

Devon	2
Medway	2
Suffolk	2
Surrey	2
Croydon	1
Darlington	1
East Sussex	1
Enfield	1
Hammersmith and Fulham	1
Lewisham	1
Lincolnshire	1
Liverpool	1
North Lincolnshire	1
St Helens	1
Wakefield	1
Total	458

8. Adoption Update

- 8.1 2013/14 has been very much a year of transition and transformation in adoption. As a result of the national focus on adoption, significant changes to regulations and processes within the Adoption Agency came into force in July 2014 with the introduction of the Adoption Agencies (Miscellaneous Amendments) regulations 2013. The aims of these changes is to reduce potential barriers, reduce delay in approving families as adoptors and, therefore, increase the number of placements available for waiting children. In addition, on the 13th March 2013, the Children and Families Act 2014 was given Royal Assent placing on statute changes to the adoption services already implemented. Councillors will also be aware that the Government has raised the profile of adoption services nationally and have considered the performance of both local authority and independent adoption agencies.
- 8.2 Alongside the statutory and regulatory changes, it is important for Cabinet to note the impact of recent case law (Re B, Re BS and Re T) and its far reaching implications for local authorities when considering permanency for children, for whom adoption would usually be the plan. The clear message from case law is that adoption should be seen as the last resort, e.g. when “nothing else will do”. The full effect of this is yet to be felt. Nevertheless, we already have had a number of challenges to Placement Orders already granted, and examples of cases that had in the past resulted in an adoption plan being agreed at courts, this is no longer the case. It is likely, therefore, that there will be a decline in the number of children being placed for adoption, and with it a possible rise in the numbers of Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs).
- 8.3 Previous annual reports to elected members have shared the strong performance of the Barking and Dagenham adoption team and in particular the inspection findings of 2012, which judged the service to be ‘good’ overall and ‘outstanding’ for safeguarding. The new inspection framework of services for children in need, looked after children, care leavers introduced in November 2103 has replaced the

stand alone inspection of the Adoption Service previously undertaken by OFSTED. The new framework incorporates adoption as part of the journey of a child and Adoption Performance has its own sub-judgement.

8.4 Given the changing inspection framework and the Government national agenda on improving adoption, Barking and Dagenham Adoption Service commissioned an Adoption Diagnostic in February 2014 to assist in analysing those practices and processes, which give rise to delay for children whenever the child's assessed permanence needs indicate the value of adoption in Barking and Dagenham. The diagnostic partners (BAAF and Core Assets) identified a number of positive findings, including:

- The borough's low disruption rate;
- Confirmation that the service had already begun to address some of the issues around drift and delay at a strategic level;
- Good improvement in adoption timeliness in Adoption Scorecard;
- Family Group Conferences are routinely held;
- Efforts are made to keep children within their birth family where possible;
- The service provided to adopters, adopted young people and birth parents by the post-adoption support team is impressive;
- Performance data is well understood and leads to action;
- Good training opportunities for staff; and
- Post Adoption support, specialist posts which enhance practice.

8.5 The following areas were identified for development, many of which were aware of, and were putting in efforts to address:

- Family finding for adoption too often appears to be a sequential process, which generally tends to start at the end of a long process of assessing birth parents and family, rather than running alongside it.
- Concern that generally family finding does not begin until a placement order has been made, although sometimes "feelers" are put out before that.
- Caseloads may be a significant contributor to delay in progressing children's plans.
- To ensure that special guardianship assessments are sufficiently rigorous to ensure that the best interests of the child will be served through special guardianship.
- Plans to re-structure the service, in order to reduce the number of transition points for children, need to be reinforced by additional quality assurance measures, such as mandatory training in permanence planning across the whole workforce.

8.6 Shortly after the locally commissioned Adoption Diagnostic in February 2014, Ofsted carried out the new single agency inspection in the borough (May 2014). Similar issues that were raised in the Diagnostic were identified in the inspection and were issues that the service was already aware of and working on, but was too early in the change process to have had any impact. As already set out in Section 4 adoption performance was graded as requires improvement. An action plan has been drawn up to address the areas for development and will be reviewed on a quarterly basis.

Adoption Performance 2013/14

- 8.7 In 2013/14, the number of children who were granted Adoption Orders was 17, slightly lower than the numbers in 2012/13. The adoption scorecard, introduced by the DfE to bring 'rigour' to the performance of adoption agencies back in 2011, are published annually for each local authority covering a three year rolling average. The scorecards measure a) the average time taken between a child entering care and moving into its adoptive family and b) the average time taken from when the authority receives a Court Order agreeing to a child being adopted and the child is matched with an appropriate adopter.
- 8.8 Barking and Dagenham's latest adoption scorecard covers the three year period of 2010-2013. We have made good progress on both measures. Our three year rolling average for indicator a) has reduced to 657 days compared to 785 days in 2009-2012, bringing our performance very close to the national average of 647 days. Performance in Barking and Dagenham for this measure is much better than our statistical neighbours.
- 8.9 Our three year rolling average for indicator b) has reduced to 144 days compared to 168 days in the preceding three years (2009-2012). Performance falls within the Government threshold for this adoption measure set at 182 days in 2010-13 and we are already lower than the 2011-2014 threshold set at 152 days. Our performance is also far better than national and that found in similar areas.
- 8.10 The Government has set very challenging adoption timescales for 2016 – a) 426 days and b) is set at 121 days. This amounts to 14 months and 4 months respectively. Examining the latest data we are on track to meet the 2013-16 thresholds for indicator b) but the adoptions service has a lot of work to do to meet the other government threshold a). To meet this, we will have to reduce the time taken between a child entering care and moving into its adoptive placement by 231 days (8 months), which is a challenging task. Our average length of care proceedings is 62 weeks in 2013/14, above the national and statistical neighbour's average of 51 weeks respectively. We have adopted 65 children from care in 2010-13 representing 10% as a whole and this is below the national average of 13% and the similar are average of 15%.
- 8.11 The time taken to adopt children in the borough has been identified an area for improvement in the BAAF diagnostic and Ofsted inspection. We recognise this and have introduced a comprehensive adoption tracker to capture all the necessary information across all relevant teams in the service involved in care planning to ensure delay and drift is minimised. Progress of all cases of looked after children awaiting a final care plan to be implemented will be monitored via the Permanency Planning Group on a monthly basis.
- 8.12 It is important to note that the children for whom adoption is the preferred permanency plan are increasingly complex in nature within Barking & Dagenham. The Borough also has a higher number of sibling groups for whom we are seeking adopters. These added intricacies make for challenging family finding and matching. However, our adoption 'breakdown rate' is very low, especially when compared to comparator boroughs which suggest that the team takes the time to make the right decisions for children. Consequently this child centred approach

may at times take the service performance outside that which is suggested by the Department for Education.

8.13 To enable the adoption service to meet the demands and changes nationally, the service has expanded through a mixture of invest to save bids and the Department for Education financial assistance in the form of Adoption Reform Grant. This financial investment has led to the team expanding to meet the changing demands of the adoption agenda and it now comprises of a Team Manager, a Deputy Team Manager, and a SW consultation/play therapist, a training officer, a Special Guardianship consultant, a post adoption co-ordinator and 9 social workers. The Barking and Dagenham Adoption Service has discussed a range of actions to target improved adopter recruitment. The service also shares marketing and communications lead with fostering. This is an important role aimed at widening the borough's adoption profile to the wider adoption community in and around East and North London, as well as Essex and Kent.

8.14 Priorities for the Adoption Service in 2014/15 are:

- Finalise the draft Permanency Planning Policy with arrangements for a formal launch for the whole of Children's Social Care.
- Develop protocol to expedite family finding prior to Placement Order.
- Improve response times to adopters and co-ordinate tracking of statutory checks and relevant information.
- Ensure that Fast Track process for adopters is incorporated into assessment
- Protocol – second time adopters, fostering for adoption, specific child etc.
- To expand the range of training offered to adopters either by attending in house training courses or LBBB purchasing bespoke.

9. Members Corporate Parenting Group (MCPG)

9.1 The Social Care Review Cabinet report of 2012/13 provided an overview of the developments and improvements made to Corporate Parenting arrangements following the Ofsted inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services in June 2012, which recommended that 'Corporate Parenting arrangements are strengthened to ensure that they properly reflect the Council's responsibilities to children looked after'. In 2013/14, progress has continued to be made in this area and we have further strengthened the Corporate Parenting arrangements to ensure strong elected member representation including the Lead Member, through the Members' Corporate Parenting Group.

9.2 The membership and terms of reference were again reviewed in August 2013 and the work of the MCPG is governed by the Corporate Parenting Strategy (April 2011-2014) and an annual corporate parenting report. The Children's Select Committee received a report on the work of the Members Corporate Parenting Group in November 2013. In December 2013, looked after children and young people presented to a pre- Assembly meeting and a report was also being taken to Assembly on that date.

9.3 In 2013/14, the panel has met regularly on a bi-monthly basis and elected members have attended regularly as have partners from health, social care, leisure services, education and the corporate management team. The Council's Rights and Participation Team have continued to attend and support the

Borough's Children in Care Council (Skittlz) at the MCPG meetings. The meetings themselves have focussed on a range of standard agenda items (including health, education and social care performance) as well as 'thematic' discussions which have been generated by young people themselves. In particular, the MCPG has focussed upon young people in care's ability to access leisure facilities (both within and beyond the Borough) and the connection to the range of associated potential health benefits, as well as the performance of our Leaving Care Service and their ability to support young care leavers accessing suitable education, employment or training options.

- 9.4 The Participation Champions group has also continued to meet on a bi-monthly basis as a sub group of the Corporate Parenting Group. This group comprises of young people and frontline social work practitioners and has been focussed around simple, pragmatic changes to practice aimed at making improvements to looked after children's lives. The Participations Champions group itself continues to be a vibrant and stimulating sub group of the Corporate Parenting Board and is valued by young people and professionals alike.
- 9.5 The Children in Care Outcomes group has also continued to meet on a quarterly basis to provide rigorous, cross agency challenge with regards to various areas of performance linked to improving outcomes for looked after children. The group is data and target driven and provides an opportunity for all partners to debate performance as well as agree strategies to tackle areas of improvement.
- 9.6 Key achievements in 2013/14 include the provision of leisure cards to all young people placed within the borough and the creation of health passports for all young people over the age of 15, a more sensitive process around arranging emergency care; and the recently revised, and user friendly format for carer's welcome books. As recommended by Ofsted, a new pledge to looked after children in care - 'Our Promises' has been produced with our children in care council, published and disseminated. We now need to review the impact of this in 2014/14 and ensure that the Pledge is known by all our looked after children across the country and not just locally. A Leaving Care Charter has also been produced due for publication in October 2014.
- 9.7 We were pleased that Ofsted in May 2014 reported that structures for the delivery of corporate parenting are in place and established with evidence of positive impact. Our Children in Council was judged as active regularly presenting their views to the corporate parenting board and that some service changes have been achieved as outlined above in point 9.6. However, inspectors also concluded that there are too few children and young people involved in our Children in Care council with many children's views not represented, including those out of borough. In addition, Ofsted identified an area for improvement – **“Ensure that corporate parenting responsibilities are fully understood by elected members to achieve greater awareness and accountability across the local authority”**. Actions to drive forward improvements in 2014/15 are detailed in the Local Authority improvement plan (Appendix 1).

10. Social Care Transformation Programme

- 10.1 The Children's Complex Needs and Social Care Division face continual challenges to service provision and an increase in demand in social care as demonstrated in section 2 of this report. These challenges present in a range of forms; a series of external inspections conducted over the past 18 months; legislative and policy change at a national and local level; a challenging financial landscape set in stark contrast to a child population growing rapidly in both number and complexity of need. Consequently, the Directorate Management Team considered how best to transform current service delivery in order to maintain a high quality and supportive service to the most vulnerable children within the borough. As a result, the Children's Social Care Transformation Programme was established in September 2013.
- 10.2 In broad terms, the purpose of the Social Care Transformation Programme is the development and implementation of an operating model for Children's Social Care (CSC), which is both financially sustainable and provides the best possible outcomes for the most vulnerable children, young people and their families in Barking and Dagenham.
- 10.3 The original Programme Brief outlined a number of objectives with associated Project Groups, all of whom have project groups and leads. The objectives are:-
- Implement the changes required by the new Working Together to Safeguard Children guidance.
 - Address the pressures in the Assessments and Care management Teams.
 - Ensure services at Tier 2 are considered in light of changes at Tier 3, to ensure alignment and the smooth transition between the two.
 - Ensure that the Assessment and Care Management Services are redesigned to deliver service objectives whilst ensuring future sustainability.
 - Implementation of the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)
 - Implementation and / or redesign of key IT systems to support operational service delivery.
 - Ensure that Looked after Children services are redesigned to deliver service objectives whilst ensuring future sustainability.
- 10.4 Since the last Social Care Review Report was presented, good progress has been made. Initial steps have been implemented to address the pressures in Assessment and Care Management and much work has been conducted to refine the relationships between Tier 3 and Tier 2 services, with a steering group now in place to provide governance. Working Together requirements have been implemented and the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) went live in April 2014. An e-CAF and Tier 2 Case Management System (CMS) is due to go live in September 2014.

- 10.5 There still, however, remains much work to do. To this end, the CSCT Programme will run for a further year, with a focus on delivering the following key projects:
- The implementation of the new Social Care structures across Assessment, Care Management and the Child Protection and Reviewing Service;
 - Delivery of the next phase of the Troubled Families Programme (LBBB have been invited to be 'Early Adopters' due to the successes of phase one;
 - Implementation of the remaining aspects of the Information System redesign work; and
 - A work stream dedicated to identifying and implementing cost reduction and containment strategies.
- 10.6 The second phase of the transformation programme and governance will continue to be provided via a Programme Board, comprising of the divisional management team. The Programme Board will be chaired by the Programme Sponsor, the Children's Services Corporate Director. The Divisional Director for Complex Needs and Social Care will operate as Project Lead for this programme.

11. Financial Implications

Compiled by Patricia Harvey, Interim Group Manager Children's

- 11.1 There are no direct financial implications to this report.
- 11.2 The Social Care and Complex Needs budget for 2014/15 is £32.6m. As at September 2014, the service was reporting a total pressure of £5.6m for 2014/15 due to demand led pressures of £3.6m and £2m reported changes in budget from 2013/14 within the service. Work is currently underway to review all costs to ameliorate the increase in demand within the Social Care division and a report being produced to quantify the service demand and unit costs that have arisen since the budget was set with options for significantly reducing or eliminating the adverse budget position for this financial year and future financial years.
- 11.3 The change from LACSEG (Local Authority Central Spend Equivalent Grant) to Education Support Grant, together with the changes to the funding of statutory services to two year olds from General Fund to the Dedicated Schools Grant released £2.7m of ongoing funding to invest in social care demand pressures and this has now been included within the base budget from 2014/15.
- 11.4 An additional £3m has also been included within the MTFS from 2015/16 to support the huge growth and demand led pressures and £1.3m towards the Children's and Families Act.

12. Legal Implications

Compiled by: Lindsey Marks, Principal Solicitor

- 12.1 The responsibility of corporate parenting applies to the Local Authority as a whole and not just the departments directly responsible delivering services to children and young persons.

12.2 The Children Act 2004 and statutory guidance specifies that the Cabinet Member for Children Services has the lead political role in respect of looked after children and young people contributing to and being satisfied that the Local Authority has high standards of corporate parenting.

12.3 Since the 1 September 2012 the Adoption Panel no longer makes recommendations to the Agency Decision Maker as to whether or not a child should be placed for adoption save in the case of a relinquished baby.

13. Other Implications

14.1 **Staffing Issues** - There are no specific staffing issues contained within this report. However, increased demand pressures in the past 12 months again have required the agreement of additional staffing to manage this demand. Whilst this additional support has greatly assisted, demand has not abated. Recruitment in social care and the level of future staffing is a key project of the Social Care Transformation programme as discussed above.

13.2 **Customer Impact** - The report highlights the areas of service improvement, as well as the areas where performance continues to be addressed.

13.3 **Safeguarding Children** - Services are determined to continually improve but such aspirations are an ever increasing challenge within a local context of growing demand and fiscal austerity.

13.4 **Crime and Disorder Issues** - The MASH element includes Police and Probation colleagues and is a route whereby early identification of sexual exploitation, gang membership and other crime and disorder issues may be identified and is therefore seen as a positive support process for reducing crime and disorder.

The new LASPO legal arrangements for young people on remand will have an impact on Children's Social Care capacity, and whilst this is funded from central government, this is a new development and therefore may need a review within the next year or so in order to measure the capacity impact.

Background Papers Used in the Preparation of the Report

- Ofsted Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers and Review of the effectiveness of the local safeguarding children board (published report July 2014 – link http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/local_authority_reports/barking_and_dagenham/051_Single%20inspection%20of%20LA%20children%27s%20services%20and%20review%20of%20the%20LSCB%20as%20pdf.pdf)
- BDSCB Annual Report 2013/14

List of Appendices:

- **Appendix 1** - Improvement Plans