

London Borough of Barking and Dagenham

# Self-evaluation of social work practice

February 2018



## 1. Introduction

This document is our self-evaluation of the quality and impact of social work practice. This document is our first self-evaluation under the new ILACS inspection framework. It will be used not only to underpin discussions with OFSTED colleagues at our first Annual Engagement Meeting but will also serve as a key tool to inform service development and improvement across Children's Care and Support. The document draws on existing documentation; activity data and performance for 2016/17. Where available, more contemporaneous data is used.

The self-evaluation is written around three key questions:

1. What do you know about the quality and impact of social work practice in your local authority?
2. How do you know it?
3. What are your plans for the next 12 months to maintain or improve practice?

The self-evaluation begins by setting out the demographic context of the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham (LBBD) in which the social care workforce is employed and the Council's current structure. It then presents an assessment of the quality and impact of social work practice, before outlining our plans to further improve practice in the next 12 months.

### Information about Barking and Dagenham

We have high aspirations for all our children and young people and their families and carers. Together with partners, our ambition is to make the borough a safe, stronger, more prosperous place to live, with opportunity for all and where no-one is left behind.

The context within which we deliver services has changed considerably in recent years and will continue to do so. The Council has taken the bold decision not to simply reduce services, but to rethink how services are delivered to ensure outcomes are improved alongside efficiency.

As part of the Council's Transformation Programme, the Council has reorganised its services and now delivers children's social care across four service blocks; Community Solutions; the Disability Service, Children's Care and Support and Commissioning. The Council has implemented commissioning and operational service blocks to provide increased scrutiny, challenge, and support, as well as ensuring value for money.

In October 2017, the management of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) moved across to our Community Solutions service. The MASH operates as the first point of contact for all contacts and referrals and is a gateway to targeted family support services, as well as specialist social care intervention. The disabled children's team sits in our integrated Disability Service for children and adults with a disability.

The Children's Care and Support service continues to provide a range of services for children and young people who are in need, at risk of harm and in need of protection, and children who are looked after in care as set out in legislation and national statutory guidance.

The Children's Care and Support service comprises of: the assessment service; a care management service now aligned to the Council's locality model, enabling closer working relationships with schools, children centres and health services including GPs; children in care team; an adoption team; a fostering team; and the Learn2Live (Leaving Care) team. The Youth Offending Service has been managed within the Children's Care and Support service since October 2017.

The Council's resources for looked after children include 144 local foster carers, and commissioned placements for looked after children from external providers placements. The Council itself does not operate any children's homes.

The Safeguarding and Quality Assurance service sits in the Children's Care and Support Commissioning block. Core responsibilities include Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) and conference chairs; the quality assurance and audit function; the statutory Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) function; the Safeguarding Lead for Education and Training; the CSE Co-ordinator; co-ordination of CDOP (Child Death Overview Panel) and the management of Barking and Dagenham Safeguarding Children Board (BDSCB). An Early Help team responsible for the quality assurance of cases stepping up/down and the commissioning of CAF training to schools in the borough is also managed in this service.

Operational management of the Prevent Team has recently been assumed by Safeguarding and Quality Assurance service.

### **Local leadership**

Upon the retirement of the previous Director of Children's Services (DCS) in July 2016 the responsibility for this statutory function was transferred to a serving Strategic Director who has been in post since 2006. Placing both the Director of Children's Services and the Director of Adult Social Services (DASS) roles with one individual, who also has responsibility for other people services such as Public Health, the Council has taken the opportunity to increase the opportunities to bring resources together to improve the life chances of children and young people.

The Chief Executive has been in post since April 2015. The Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) has been in post since September 2017. The previous Chair was in post for 6 years.

### **Previous Ofsted inspections**

The inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after, and care leavers was in May 2014 and was judged as requires improvement in all judgements. The review of the effectiveness of the LSCB was also judged as requires improvement.

In 2017 the effectiveness of services in the local area for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities was inspected.

Since the last inspection, eight serious incident notifications have been submitted to Ofsted. Two serious case reviews (SCRs) have been completed and one is ongoing.

### **Local context**

Barking and Dagenham is a young, rapidly growing and increasingly diverse borough and is one of the fastest-changing and growing communities in Britain. The population of Barking and Dagenham is estimated to be 206,000 in 2016 (ONS mid-year estimates 2016), an increase of 26% over the last 15 years and 11% over the last 5 years. National statistics forecast a population of 220,000 by 2020, and up to 275,000 by 2037.

Alongside population increase, Barking and Dagenham is much more diverse than 15 years ago, with 50% of the population from minority ethnic backgrounds compared with 15% in 2001. This is projected to increase to 62% over the next 25 years.

### **Children living in our area**

Approximately 61,800 children and young people under the age of 18 years live in Barking and Dagenham. This is 30% of the total population in the area, the highest in the UK (ONS mid-year estimates 2016). The borough also has the third largest proportion of 10 to 17-year olds in the UK at 11%.

Children and young people from minority ethnic groups accounted for 54% of all children aged 0-17 living in the area compared with 22% across England (2011 Census). Ethnicity projections for Barking and Dagenham estimate this figure to have increased to 64% in 2017 (Greater London Authority, Housing-led ethnic group projections, 2017). The largest minority ethnic group of children and young people in the area is Black African. The proportion of children and young people who speak English as an additional language is 56% in primary schools, more than twice as high as the national average, and in secondary schools is 42% – nearly three times higher than the national average.

LBBB has an average number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (25 as at Q3 2017/18), which is 6% of the total looked after children population.

Approximately 29% of children in the borough are living in low income families. The proportion of children entitled to free school meals in primary schools is 15% (the national average is 14%) and in secondary schools is 17% (the national average is 13%).

Barking and Dagenham is among the most deprived local authorities in England; it has the 12th highest Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) score in England and the third highest IMD score in London.

Domestic violence and abuse continues to be a significant issue in Barking and Dagenham and impacts on all service areas across the borough. It accounts for 37% of violence with injury offences in the borough (rolling 12-month figure to December 2017) and is a presenting factor for around 16% of children's social care contacts annually.

### **Children open to social care**

As at the end of 2016/17, a total of 2,054 children and young people were receiving a service as a child in need, child subject to a child protection plan, child looked after in care or young person leaving care. This has increased to 2,310 as of Q3 2017/18 – a rate of 374 per 10,000, which is in line with statistical neighbours (377), but higher than the rate for London.

### **Children in need and child protection**

At the time of writing 1,274 children had been identified through assessment as being formally in need of a specialist children's service, an annual increase of 15%. 347 children and young people were the subject of a child protection plan. This is an increase from 294 at 31 March 2017 and 266 12 months earlier. Seven children lived in a privately arranged fostering placement. This is an increase from four at 31 March 2017 and the same as at Q3 2016/17.

### **Children looked after**

416 children are being looked after by the local authority (a rate of 67 per 10,000 children). Of this number:

- 246 (59%) lived outside the local authority area
- 26 (6%) lived in residential care homes, outside the authority area
- 272 (65%) lived with foster families, of whom 160 (59%) lived out of the authority area
- 22 (5%) lived with parents, of whom seven (32%) lived out of the authority area
- 25 (6%) children were unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

During the year to date there have been 10 completed adoptions. We expect this to be 12 by the end of the year. 27 children have become subject to special guardianship orders (SGOs), bringing our total number of children on a SGO to 246. 151 children ceased to be looked after this year so far, of whom 11 (7%) subsequently returned to be looked after. 24 (16%) young people ceased to be looked after and moved on

to independent living. 127 (84%) young people ceased to be looked after are now living in houses of multiple occupation.

## 2. The quality and impact of social work practice in Barking and Dagenham

Our borough is one with high levels of need and, overall, our children's social care cases are complex. The Council, including Elected Members, recognise this pressure and improving the quality and impact of social work practice is a priority.

Following the 2014 inspection an improvement plan was implemented to address the recommendations, and all have been completed. Our performance monitoring regime was revised to improve focus on both outcomes *and* the key elements of practice contributing to continuous service improvement. This included greater scrutiny of the quality of referrals, assessments, and planning, and how well we capture and are influenced by the voice of the child. Support to social workers has been strengthened ensuring good supervision and management oversight of casework.

To assess distance travelled since the 2014 inspection, the DCS commissioned an independent review of the quality of social work practice in September 2016. This review comprised a case file audit of 40 cases, including children in need, child protection, looked after children and care leavers. Follow-up interviews with social workers and managers were conducted where appropriate.

Overall, the review was positive and reported that *'in none of the audits were children found to be unsafe as to require immediate escalation to senior managers'*. The review noted that *'overall the quality of the work audited was of an adequate and often good quality and in a small number of cases it was outstanding'*.

The review reported that risk was identified, responded to, and reduced in a timely way. Overall, cases were worked with at an appropriate level of risk, demonstrating that thresholds are applied appropriately across the service. Families and young people were mostly appropriately involved, but the voice of the child was not always reflected on the case record. Overall decision making was graded as good. The quality of assessments was judged adequate; plans were fit for purpose and reasonably SMART and no plans were rated as inadequate. Management oversight and supervision was found to be variable in quality, although evidence of strengthened frontline management was noted.

The review concluded that the single biggest threat to the quality of practice was the high level of locum staff and consequently lack of ownership and high staff turnover. This was not a surprise as the service faced significant challenges with recruiting experienced social workers. Since that time, focussed recruitment activity has reduced reliance on agency staff from 55% to 38%.

Since 2016 we believe that progress has continued with our quality assurance systems indicating a journey of steady improvement.

### Children who need help and protection

Many families in the borough are supported through early help services, which span universal and targeted support. Children's Centres remain pivotal to the early help offer and provide outstanding services (Ofsted). Our primary early help tool is the Common Assessment Framework (CAF), which is well established and embedded across partner agencies, particularly schools.

In 2017 the Council launched Community Solutions, our flagship early intervention and prevention service. Community Solutions brings together under a single umbrella the range of previously discrete services in place to help residents early as they start to experience difficulties, with the aim of preventing escalation. Key components such as Children's Centres, Early Help and MASH now sit in Community Solutions.

We have a significant number of children and families supported through a CAF, though this year has seen a gradual reduction in the number being initiated<sup>1</sup>. This has been identified to the partnership and a review is underway into the root causes of this decline to determine if there is any cause for concern.

Step up from early help to social care remains low: an indicator of effective working with children and families. Step down arrangements are in place. The percentage of children referred with a CAF in place is lower than we would like, and this is under review as part of a wider piece of work to develop our new Early Help and Early Intervention Strategy<sup>2</sup>.

Early Help cases are subject to quality assurance processes and the most recent audit findings demonstrate that the overall quality of CAF assessments is good.

We have a successful Troubled Families programme, which is performing well as noted by the Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government. We are working with 2,782 families and have submitted 917 claims in total. The Council is being considered for Earned Autonomy and has reached the final stage of the process.

The children's social care triage and MASH is the single point of contact for all safeguarding contacts and referrals and is effective at gatekeeping and managing demand. There is good multi-agency working and sharing of relevant information to make informed decisions on how to progress a referral.

Co-location of partners and social workers in the MASH means that real time intelligence about risks to children is shared effectively, and this demonstrates a shared ownership of decisions to keep children safe<sup>3</sup>. However, in some cases, not all key professionals participate in strategy discussions to inform effective decision making and safeguarding. This is an area for improvement.

The police make high numbers of domestic abuse notifications each day which are screened in the MASH. The quality of the police Merlins and the application of risk grading (red, amber, and green) is improving. The police flag up urgent cases with the MASH managers to ensure that they are prioritised. Senior social workers within triage and MASH use a domestic abuse risk assessment tool to assess and to inform safety planning. This is used effectively to ensure that children are protected. Management decisions are well recorded, analytical and include detailed direction to social workers about next steps in safeguarding the child.

Safeguarding concerns are promptly recognised and passed on quickly for assessment and action. For children in need of protection, strategy meetings are identified swiftly and prioritised for urgent action. Cases are immediately forwarded to the referral and assessment duty team while MASH checks are completed<sup>4</sup>.

The number of contacts received remains steady, with a very high percentage of these being processed within 24 hours<sup>5</sup>. This is despite an increase in the volume of social care referrals, though we are in line with the London and national rates. The proportion of referrals progressing to assessment remains stable<sup>6</sup>. This indicates a robust screening system preventing unnecessary intervention. While the proportions remain at around 70:30, the increase in the actual number of children going through to assessment, and the increase in child protection and children in need cases across the service, is causing pressure.

Our repeat referral rate is good, indicating that when children are referred they receive a service that meets their needs<sup>7</sup>. Contacts made using the Multi Agency Referral Form (MARF) are variable but improving in quality. Post inspection in 2014, a new Multi-Agency Referral Form was introduced along with guidance and a programme of multi-agency training, including safeguarding leads in schools, was delivered.

Thematic audits were undertaken in March 2016 and 2017 on referrals, with the clear majority rated as 'good' or 'requires improvement'<sup>8</sup>. A small number of referrals were found to be inadequate due to insufficient information being captured. Some referrals lacked information needed to inform the most appropriate and proportionate responses. Around 70% of referrals could have been worked at early intervention (Tier 2), indicating that variability and inconsistency in the understanding and application of children in need thresholds by partners remains.

Referrals progress quickly to the duty and assessment teams and are promptly allocated to a qualified social worker. Managers in the MASH risk assess and rate contacts appropriately as red, amber, or green. This ensures that the most urgent work is prioritised. There are no unallocated social care cases.

Good use is made of risk assessment tools and children's family history, alongside purposeful management oversight. Social workers obtain appropriate consent from families and, where the need for consent is overruled for the protection of children, the reasons for this are clearly recorded. Appropriate feedback following contact is provided to referrers to share the actions taken to promote children's welfare.

Support for families who do not meet threshold is brokered through daily multi agency step-down meetings. At these meetings, managers agree the type and level of support required and identify a lead professional to provide and resource holistic family support. The number of families that have been stepped down through this process is currently lower than we would wish but is expected to increase as the new pathway beds in.

The quality of assessments continues to improve, though we acknowledge that not all assessments yet meet the expected standard. For example, some assessments do not demonstrate that the voice of the child has been heard (though this is improving<sup>9</sup>), what direct work has been done with the child or evidence the challenge to parents, though again some improvement is evident<sup>10</sup>. The use of analysis and the development of an outline plan remain areas for improvement in practice.

The volume of assessments completed and authorised has increased though this has not impacted on timeliness, which remains above average<sup>11</sup>. We do recognise, however, that we have a lower proportion of assessment being completed within 10 days. Understanding this is a key line of current enquiry.

It has been particularly difficult to recruit permanent staff in the Assessment Service. This is exacerbated by the increase in activity placing more pressure on caseloads in this area.

During 2016/17, significant progress was made in reducing the number of children in need cases with a focus on completing plans in a timely way together with tighter management oversight and supervision of cases. The children in need project team was set up to target and review children in need cases, tackle drift and close work which had been unnecessarily open. This was successful<sup>12</sup>. However, due to the increase in referrals and the number of children under assessment, the number of children in need in receipt of a statutory service has begun to increase this year<sup>13</sup>.

All children in need who require a plan have one, but the quality of those plans remains variable. Whilst recent audits again show a positive direction of travel, this remains an area requiring improvement<sup>14</sup>. Reviewing the increase in demand and the quality and impact of social work practice for children in need is a key focus for leaders and senior management in 2018.

A key area of focus following the 2014 inspection was, and continues to be, Strategy Discussions, and that they should involve appropriate partner agencies and are better recorded. We have improved our systems; made better use of technology and introduced a standard format to include an interim safety plan on all cases in which there is a strategy discussion or meeting. Themed audits in 2016 and 2017 show considerable improvement in agency participation and found the application of threshold and decision making was appropriate<sup>15</sup>. Significant improvement has also been made with group strategy meetings<sup>16</sup>.

We continue to experience a high number of section 47 enquiries, and our investigation rate is higher than average. The number of children subject to a child protection plan has increased significantly since the end of the previous year and is now significantly higher than average rates<sup>17</sup>, though we have a lower than average proportion of children subject to a child protection plan for a subsequent time, indicating that many children subject to child protection plans make good progress and services are having an impact on safeguarding and protecting children<sup>18</sup>.

This area of practice has been closely scrutinised through two independent reviews that took place in 2015 and 2016. Decision making was found to be appropriate. Case file audits report that in *'general the decision making and the application of thresholds for child protection investigation was found to be safe and appropriate, and the number of cases where over cautious practice occurred was small'* (2015 independent



report). More recently internal audits show the quality of section 47 investigations has improved, and that the threshold was applied appropriately<sup>19</sup>.

All child protection plans are reviewed within timescale and good performance has been maintained in holding initial child protection conferences on time<sup>20</sup>.

Recent conference observations are graded as good with outstanding features on child focus and participation and use of communication. However, an area for further improvement emerging from audits relates to Chairs monitoring cases between reviews and raising and evidencing practice alerts routinely. There is a revised system in place for child protection chairs to raise practice alerts with social workers and team managers. This records formal and informal alerts and when they are resolved with an expected date for resolution.

Conferences are well attended by most agencies, although Police and GP attendance at child protection case conferences remain areas for improvement as was the case in the 2014 inspection<sup>21</sup>. Attendance by the Police was also highlighted as an area of concern in the 2016 HMIC inspection of the Metropolitan Police, and inspection that concluded “the response from the MPS was consistently not good enough”. The police have set up a series of meetings across the new East Basic Command Unit (BCU) to discuss options for improvements. This remains a significant concern impacting on social work practice.

These concerns been formally escalated through the LSCB. The Safeguarding Manager has also met with the Designated GP to agree a report format for conference which imports information from the GPs own IT systems. We have agreed locally that child protection chairs will consult with GPs to improve practice in this area.

A system to secure feedback from professionals and family members is in place, and this has shown positive results with a consensus that conferences are well-chaired; decision making was strong and conference outcomes were clear<sup>22</sup>. Feedback from parents is also positive in some areas<sup>23</sup>.

Child protection visits are timely and there has been a notable improvement since last year<sup>24</sup>. In most cases, child protection core groups are regular. Core group attendance by key partners remains variable.

The number of children on plans for 2 years or more remains low<sup>25</sup>. Monthly reviews of children on plans for 18 months or more take place to ensure children do not stay on plans for a long time. Performance on children de-planned in the year who had been on a plan for 2 years or more has, however increased<sup>26</sup>.

The quality of child protection plans has improved. The majority were graded as good<sup>27</sup> and no child protection plans were rated as inadequate in the most recent audit. Whilst still an area for improvement, the voice of the child and young person is being captured in more cases and overall case recording has improved.

In cases where child protection plans are not delivering the desired outcomes for children, legal advice is sought in a timely manner and the pre-proceedings process is used. These cases are carefully tracked<sup>1</sup>. If a case remains in pre-proceedings longer than five-months, the case is recalled to a Legal Care Planning Meeting. This is robust practice and ensures cases do not drift. This has resulted in a reduction in the number of cases in public law outline without clear direction<sup>28</sup>.

In May 2017, the police raised safeguarding concerns related to children living in Barking and Dagenham who may be at risk of radicalisation through being exposed to extremist ideology. The concerns arose from the activities of two men arrested and now standing trial for offences under the Counter Terrorism Act 2000. A complex strategy meeting was established to explore risk of harm and the protection of the children identified by the police.

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<sup>1</sup> On the ‘Pre-Proceedings Case Tracker’

A steering group chaired by the DCS is in place to oversee the implementation of actions identified to respond to issues related to Prevent, social cohesion and the safeguarding of children, young people, and adults in the borough.

Safeguarding investigations have taken place for a larger number of children and young people than were initially identified by the Metropolitan Police Counter Terrorism Command. The volume of assessments and related activity was greater than that which could be absorbed by the Assessment Service<sup>29</sup>. The Home Office agreed to fund additional capacity for this team and the NHS agreed funding for health professionals able to provide specialist assessments and treatment packages to children, young people, and their families.

An additional multi-agency team managed by the Head of Service Assessment, has been established. It is anticipated that the team will be required until September 2018.

The additional resources are welcome, and the situation is being closely monitored. The steering group receives regular reports on activities and outcomes. The local authority's response to this emerging issue was timely and continues to be appropriately robust.

### **Children looked after and achieving permanence**

The number of looked after children had been on a downward trajectory since 2014/15 and has stabilised during the past year<sup>30</sup>. Given the population increase we consider this to be a positive demonstration of effective targeted interventions. We are, however, clear that this trajectory cannot be maintained in the face of a growth in the child population and rising demand.

Progress is being made with permanent recruitment in all teams responsible for looked after children, which impacts positively on practice and social workers building relationships with children and young people. Comparatively, there is stability within the children in care, leaving care, fostering and adoption services. All looked after children have an allocated social worker and, when leaving care, a Personal Adviser. Caseloads are below 1:20 in all teams.

The majority of looked after children and young people are placed with in-house foster carers, with the numbers placed with agency foster care reducing every year<sup>31</sup>. The number of in-house foster carers has risen slightly this year<sup>32</sup>, and high number of children continue to be cared for in family-based care<sup>33</sup> within, or near, the borough which we consider hugely beneficial in maintaining links with family and services, including schools where appropriate<sup>34</sup>.

The number of children placed in residential care has fallen during the past year as appropriate arrangements have been put in place for moving on in their care plans<sup>35</sup>. Work continues to review all placements of children in residential care and ensure we have in place the most appropriate plans for them.

The proportion of adolescent looked after children (aged 16 to 17) is above the national average, while all other age groups are lower.

The proportion of children coming into care under voluntary arrangements (section 20) has significantly reduced<sup>36</sup>. The 2014 inspection identified the need to address the high number of children coming into care in police protection. Significant progress has been made and performance is now in line with the London average<sup>37</sup>. Police protection continues to receive close attention through a regular monthly meeting with Senior Police Officers to review performance and consider individual cases highlighted in audit work. All police protection cases are audited to ensure appropriate decision making.

A higher proportion of children are in care proceedings and the proportion on full care orders has increased<sup>38</sup>, an indication that children coming into care need to be in care. We have the seventh highest number of care proceedings in London, and this continues to rise significantly<sup>39</sup>.

The average duration of care proceedings within the Family Court is improving despite the increased numbers and for timelessness we are in the top third overall. Our average length of care proceedings is comparable with statistical neighbours, below London and just above England averages<sup>40</sup>. The latest figures released by East London Family Court indicate that our average length of care proceedings has reduced further to 22 weeks, well within the 26-week expectation. Cases that exceed 26 weeks are due to complexity of cases or court availability for lengthy hearings.

Our Legal and Children's Care and Support services work effectively together at all stages. Compliance has improved, and court work is timely, resulting in swifter decision making for children. The quality of court statements and care plans have also significantly improved as demonstrated through the positive feedback from guardians ad litem (GALs) and judges on this area of social work practice. We provide support to social workers through regular training, provision of examples of good reports and regular feedback from the Court Progression Manager.

A range of targeted services are in place to support children on the edge of care (or at risk of placement breakdown) through the Access to Resources team, Family Group Conferencing, and Restorative Justice. These services provide targeted interventions and are mostly effective in keeping children in their families and support children who return home<sup>41</sup>.

We have recently commissioned the PAUSE project to help avoid children being taken into care where mothers have had multiple children removed. The PAUSE project currently has 11 women fully signed up to the programme and is in contact with a further 16 in the pre-engagement stage. This work is already having a positive impact on the women involved and it is anticipated that the programme will help to avoid further removals of children from their care.

Further targeted interventions are being commissioned including an Edge of Care Social Impact Bond (SIB).

Our permanency policy is being refreshed and will shortly be available through our online manual of procedures. The policy for permanency includes the commitment to placing siblings together when placements are being made and when plans for longer term permanency are agreed.

Permanency Planning is monitored by Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) to avoid drift and delay, including the use of practice alerts if necessary. A thematic audit completed in November 2017 graded permanency planning as requires improvement and this related to the issue of matching children to their foster carers, as SGO and adoption arrangements are embedded in practice.

The timeliness of visits to children in our care has improved, though we consider further improvement is still required<sup>42</sup>. The quality of care plans has also improved<sup>43</sup> and thematic audits completed in November 2017 show strong evidence in relation to meeting children's complex, cultural and identity needs<sup>44</sup> and the quality of placement and stability<sup>45</sup>.

A high proportion<sup>46</sup> of looked after children participate in their review, including via a digital form, and the timeliness of child in care reviews is good<sup>47</sup>. These good standards provide a strong basis from which to support the planning and reviewing process for children and their outcomes.

Scrutiny and challenge by IROs remains variable and overall requires improvement<sup>48</sup>. The service has however now appointed a permanent experienced Senior IRO and all IROs are permanent officers, which will lead to improvement. Midway reviews remain a practice area for improvement.

We have prioritised tracking of cases on children waiting for permanency and children who are vulnerable from CSE and gang affiliation and children who regularly go missing. IROs use the practice alert process appropriately, and where necessary the formal dispute resolution process to drive good practice.

Placement stability for children and young people in care is an important factor impacting on positive outcomes. Whilst the proportion of our children experiencing three or more placements in a year has reduced<sup>49</sup> long-term placement stability continues to be a challenge<sup>50</sup>, though in many cases placement changes have been proactive and planned e.g. rehabilitation to parents or moves from residential care to fostering.

A range of interventions are provided to prevent placement breakdown such as Restorative Justice, Family Group Conference interventions, a 'buddy' system with in-house foster carers, and a Parenting Teenagers course for foster carers.

In addition, we have been successful in our bid for funding to set up the Mockingbird Fostering Programme, an alternative method of delivering foster care with the potential to improve placement stability, safety and permanency for children and young people in care and to improve support for, and retention of, foster carers. This is now in place and the aim is to expand the model after the first year's pilot.

In the last four years, performance regarding looked after children health assessments reviews has been good<sup>51</sup>, though there are fluctuations throughout the year due to children entering the care systems. A fortnightly meeting is in place between social care and health to 'troubleshoot' issues impacting on timely performance of initial and review health assessments.

As part of the health assessments, emotional issues are identified, and emotional wellbeing is monitored as part of the annual health check process. A good proportion<sup>52</sup> of looked after children return a Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), and the results of those SDQ scores show good performance<sup>53</sup>.

Crime and substance misuse levels among our looked after children are the same, or similar, to England average<sup>54</sup>. There are arrangements in place for making a referral to child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) and providing a response through screening and an assessment within 28 days and we have a dedicated CAMHS looked after children social worker. This worker provides an initial screening within 2 weeks of referral and provides up to six sessions to support engagement in appropriate CAMHS services.

The number of privately fostered children known to the authority is 7 and whilst an improvement on end of year (4) continues to be a small number, despite raising the profile of such arrangements. The number of private fostering referrals and assessments remains broadly static<sup>55</sup>. Privately fostered children receive timely and appropriate assessments with all of cases visited in timescale.

Our Virtual School is effective and works well with Social Workers, Designated Teachers, and Schools. This is evidenced by improvements in personal education plans (PEPs)<sup>56</sup> and looked after child attainment overall.

We have introduced new arrangements for 'e-PEPs'. This system enables the PEP to be reviewed and updated each term with two meetings interspersed with work completed online. PEP champions are in place, and the Designated Teacher network has recently focused on e-PEP completion and quality this term.

The quality of PEPs is also improving<sup>57</sup> and we are on track to reach our target to improve the quality of PEPs to 60% good or outstanding by the end of spring term and to 80% by end of the academic year. The Virtual School has quality control measures in place and surgeries are held with social workers and designated teachers to improve PEP completion and quality.

The majority of looked after children attend good or outstanding schools and are receiving full-time education. Absence from school is reducing<sup>58</sup> and fixed-term exclusions are below the national average<sup>59</sup>. There have been no permanent exclusions this year.

2016 attainment results show that at Key Stage 2 on all national measures, our looked after children outperformed the national average and ranked joint first in the country<sup>60</sup>. The results were also close to the

borough average for the combined reading, maths and writing measure, demonstrating a significant closing of the gap. At Key Stage 4, the results show that looked after children's attainment is very close to the national average for looked after children, but below the results for the borough<sup>2</sup>.

We recognise that more effectively reflecting the voice of children and young people in the shape and design of our services is an area that requires strengthening, and improvement is still required. Representatives of the Children in Care Council (CiCC) and Skittlz sit on the Members' Corporate Parenting Group (MCPG), including conducting an annual 'takeover' of the Safeguarding Children Board. There has been an increase in membership of younger children and further work is being undertaken to increase the involvement of care leavers.

We have seen improvements to services made as a direct result of this engagement. These include the issuing of business cards to social workers and IROs for looked after children on their introductory visit; foster carer information booklets that are issued prior to placement moves; involvement in the recruitment of the Designated Looked After Children Nurse, and improvements to PEPs. In 2017, Skittlz produced a child-friendly guide to Pupil Premium Plus.

We also conduct two annual looked after children surveys, including an 'appraisal' of the social work service received, with reports provided to the Members Corporate Parenting Group and fed back to the service. Survey findings<sup>61</sup> are demonstrating improvements across indicators such as looked after children reporting that their social worker listens to them and takes their views seriously, the ability to contact their social worker, knowing who to contact if their social worker is unavailable, and knowing how to make a complaint.

The Children in Care Council is supported by the Children's Rights Officer who also offers a service to support individual children. Arrangements have continued to provide support through the Independent Advocacy Service which is commissioned from Barnardo's and Independent Visiting Service through Action for Children.

Care leavers are annually involved in delivering 'Total Respect' training to frontline staff and trained over 30 staff and Members in 2017.

## **Adoption**

Adoption performance requires improvement and remains a key priority for the local authority, as well as for the Lead Member for Children's Services and the DCS. The timeliness of adoption is an area for improvement as measured by the adoption scorecard, but the local authority's adoption service and the quality of social work practice in securing outcomes for all children and young people is improving and, in some areas, is good.

The 2013–16 scorecard reported a decline on adoption timeliness performance. A low proportion of those children with adoption plans move in with their new family within the target of 14 months<sup>62</sup>. Seventy-five children were adopted during this period, representing 10% of children who left care<sup>63</sup>. Around three-quarters of those adopted fell in harder-to-place categories<sup>3</sup>.

Our priority is to adopt children across all categories in a timely way and we strive to achieve the best outcomes for our children. This is reflected in the performance on placement disruptions and adoption breakdown<sup>64</sup> demonstrating that the matching process and the adoption support provided is robust and of good quality.

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<sup>2</sup> 2017 attainment results are not yet validated.

<sup>3</sup> Disabilities, sibling groups, older children (aged 5 years or older), and Black and minority ethnic groups.

Locally there has been a decrease in the number of children made subject to an adoption order<sup>65</sup>, though this reduction is reflected nationally and is linked to the decline in placement orders being granted.

Despite these challenges, performance on adoption timeliness is predicted to improve significantly compared with previous years<sup>66</sup> though these improvements will take some time to impact fully on the three-year scorecard due to its' very nature.

Recruiting a sufficient pool of adopters remains challenging and an area of focus. This year four adoptive families have been approved and three are in assessment compared with six last year and 12 in 2015/16. The local authority uses consortium arrangements and the Adoption Register, Adoption Link, national exchange events and consortium family finding meetings to identify appropriate potential adopters.

The number of children being made the subject of special guardianship orders (SGOs) has increased<sup>67</sup> and we have seen a correlation in the reduction of placement orders and the increase in SGOs. The assessment process for special guardians is a priority and we plan to bring more of these assessments 'in-house' to the adoption service rather than independent social workers being commissioned. The quality of independent social worker reports is too variable and, if not robust, the long-term sustainability of the placement is often challenging, or the support package required is extensive.

Adoption support remains a strength and good specialist training is provided for foster carers, social workers, special guardians, and adopters. Feedback from adopters remains positive reporting that the support received is appropriately aligned to the post-adoption support plan.

An Adoption Improvement Group is in place, chaired by the Operational Director, and systems have been put in place to reduce drift. In addition, more robust decisions are being taken to apply to revoke placement orders more quickly for children where we do not believe that there is a realistic possibility for adoption.

The Adoption Team is stable and permanent with manageable caseloads. The Adoption Panel is effectively managed and chaired with the Adoption Team providing good support. The quality of prospective adopter reports is mostly good. The quality of child permanency reports remains variable but is improving.

## Care leavers

The care leavers service is stable and mainly composed of permanent staff. Caseloads are manageable for social workers and young people advisors in the service.

The quality and range of information and support provided to care leavers remains good. All care leavers have an allocated worker and the stability of the service ensures a consistent approach to managing care leavers' experiences and progress. Interventions are robust and care leavers have a good awareness of their entitlements and participate in care planning. Supervision and case management is regular and generally good<sup>68</sup>. Ninety-eight percent of care leavers aged 18 and above have an up-to-date pathway plan and the quality of pathway plans are mostly graded good.

Increasing the number of young people including care leavers in education, employment, and training (EET) is a top strategic priority for the Council and its' Members and progress is good. We have reduced the number of care leavers for whom we do not know their outcomes, and performance is now better than average<sup>69</sup> and the percentage of our care leavers in EET is improving and above average<sup>70</sup>.

We have an ambitious target to ensure 30% of Council apprenticeships will be filled by care leavers by April 2018. We have a policy of ring-fenced interviews for all care leavers applying for a Council apprenticeship

and transition grants<sup>4</sup> are available. We also offer paid Council internship positions for graduating care leavers, with three internships delivered in 2017. Currently, there are six care leavers in apprenticeships, of which four are Council apprenticeships.

The number of care leavers attending higher education and university continues to be good compared with other areas<sup>71</sup> and a greater number of young people are living in semi-independent placements<sup>72</sup>. This year, further work has been undertaken to prepare more young people for independent living as they are transitioning through to adulthood.

The proportion of our care leavers living in suitable accommodation is in line with national and similar areas<sup>73</sup>. Of those classed in unsuitable accommodation, six are in prison and the remainder we are not in contact with. All care leavers in receipt of a service are living in suitable accommodation. No care leavers are living in bed and breakfast accommodation.

Securing accommodation for our care leavers has been a significant challenge in recent years. Historically we have placed care leavers predominantly using social housing stock, but as availability has become more limited due to growing demand for housing, we have implemented an alternative strategy to secure good quality housing for our care leavers. This includes procuring accommodation from the private sector, the use of social housing voids in the borough and buying of new homes<sup>74</sup>.

The provision of training and support on living independently for young people leaving care whilst improving, requires further development. Young people receive a leaving care grant, and the Council provides a scheme for savings for children and young people in care which they can access when they leave care.

A 'Staying Put' scheme is in place enabling young people to continue to live with carers beyond the age of 18. At the end of 2016-17, 17 young people were in such arrangements.

We continue to work hard to involve more care leavers in influencing practice and service development. Care leavers are involved in the interviews for the recruitment of staff in the Leaving Care service and have also recently quality assured 16+ and 18+ supported provisions as part of a large-scale procurement exercise. Young people in care aged 16 and above and care leavers attend our annual event to celebrate achievements. The awards cover a wide range of achievements, including formal qualifications as well as apprenticeships, volunteering, participation in groups and giving back to the community.

### **Children missing from home, education, and care**

The number of children missing from home and care, as well as repeat episodes is reducing<sup>75</sup>; and the number of looked after children missing more than 24 hours is also reducing<sup>76</sup>.

Repeat missing episodes for those not previously known to care have reduced through automatic referral to Family Group Conferencing who ensure that any missing child who does not have an allocated social worker, is offered an interview within 72 hours of their return home<sup>77</sup>.

The proportion of children who have a return home interview is improving<sup>78</sup> though we recognise that further improvement is required and are working hard to deliver this. A review of instances of children in care going missing is underway to ensure case recording and improved practice in this area and links made with the CSE Co-ordinator.

The Missing Children Coordinator is co-located with the MASH to ensure closer partnership working which is effective, however in keeping with earlier themes attendance of police at multi-agency strategy meetings for

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<sup>4</sup> £50 per week for all care leavers taking up apprenticeships, £70 per week for a 2-year apprenticeship

missing children is too low. The implementation of Liquid Logic will improve systems for monitoring missing children.

Policies and procedures are in place and up to date for all missing children, both those known to care and those unknown to care, including procedures for return home interviews. The policy is revised and disseminated annually. The borough guidance on children missing from education is currently being reviewed as part of the annual review process.

Early identification and information sharing on children missing is timely. There is a daily report that is circulated widely<sup>79</sup> and includes children under the care of other Local Authorities who are placed in the borough. All long-term or high-risk missing children are clearly identified, and cases shared at pre-MASE to decide whether to escalate to MASE.

Children missing from education is managed well and robust processes and procedures are in place. Good systems are in place to track CME who move out of the borough and children who live in the borough not on a school roll. In April 2017, a secure online form for schools was set up for schools to comply with the new Pupil Registration Regulations (requiring schools to inform their local authority on the day of any child being removed from the school roll). Compliance is at 100%.

### **Child sexual exploitation (CSE)**

We have recently updated our CSE problem profile. This reports that most young people at risk or subject to CSE are teenage girls aged 13–17; from all sections of the community but nearly half are White British and the main CSE model found in the borough was peer-on-peer and online. We are currently refreshing our CSE Strategy in accordance with the findings of the problem profile.

The number of young people at risk or subject of CSE has increased in the borough and we currently have 70 open CSE social care cases.

The local authority has invested in CSE and a full-time CSE Coordinator is in post in the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance service. The CSE Coordinator co-chairs pre Multi Agency Sexual Exploitation (MASE) with the police and attends the MASE, as well as the Serious Youth Violence Group and the Missing Children Strategic Group. This enables links across agencies for young people being identified with CSE and the timely sharing of information.

Membership of MASE has been reviewed and strengthened to ensure attendance by appropriate, decision making managers, and pathways into the MASE simplified. The MASE meetings provide tactical oversight of CSE in the borough and supports appropriate strategic responses across the multi-agency partnership.

There are more than 60 CSE champions across the borough from a range of agencies and schools who meet quarterly. Champions act as conduits for learning and information dissemination across their agencies and organisations. There is a training element to all CSE champions' forums. CSE resources also include a CSE advocate for young people with disabilities, autism, and SEN through Barnardo's; a young people's Independent Domestic and Sexual Violence Advocacy (IDSVA) through Victim Support, a Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC)-funded Safer London CSE advocate and a school-home support worker. The borough is also supporting a MOPAC bid by Barnardo's that will provide the borough with one full-time harmful sexual behaviours (HSB) worker.

A directory of CSE resources, published on the LSCB website, has been developed to assist practitioners to identify services and agencies that can support planning and their work with young people affected by CSE. We have also purchased a gold membership for the NWG, which entitles staff to access resources and training on CSE.



The quality and impact of social work practice in relation to child sexual exploitation (CSE) is improving with increased awareness of factors that may indicate CSE. Multi-agency audits evidence some good quality work having a significant and positive impact on young people, including good partnership work and the sharing of information. Overall, case file audits on CSE cases judge assessments as too variable and not consistently good and improvement is required for young people who become subject to a Child in Need plan, as documented earlier in this report. Current work plans are focusing on raising the awareness of all staff across the borough, as well as parents and the wider public.

Training is in place for a range of staff including most recently those in Parks and foster carers. There is a programme of events planned for the week preceding CSE Awareness Day in March 2018 delivered by and for young people in the borough, parents, carers, local businesses, and practitioners aimed at raising awareness.

### **Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)**

We work hard to ensure a timely and effective response to the allegations of harm involving those working with children or vulnerable adults. The number of Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) allegations received declined in 2016/17<sup>80</sup> with 19% meeting the threshold. During the current year we have seen an increase in the number of referrals as well as an increase (to 32%) of the proportion meeting the threshold<sup>81</sup>.

Since May 2017, the LADO has become involved in Operation Palm - children at risk of serious harm due to the threat of radicalisation. The LADO team have worked closely with the Police Counter Terrorism Command and the Charity Commission to address these risks and to try to identify learning for the future. This learning will form part of an external evaluation of all this work that has been commissioned given there is very little national experience to draw on.

A regular review of LADO cases is undertaken and cases which have faltered due to long investigations, lack of progress or feedback have been escalated to the appropriate manager or Safeguarding Board partner.

There has been an increase in communication to the person subject to the LADO process (where appropriate) and to the child involved (again where considered appropriate). An annual report to the BDSCB is produced and scrutinised by the Board. The reporting and monitoring of LADO cases will improve with the new bespoke platform developed in the Liquid Logic system.

### 3. How do we know it?

Recognising that much of the evidence base for measuring the quality and impact of social work in our borough is referenced throughout the previous section, this part of the report will focus largely on the systems and processes in place that allows us to understand where we are. It will discuss summary findings from audit – many of which have previously been described – as well as the leadership, management and governance arrangements that are in place, and comment on the assessed efficacy of these. It will also outline the more prosaic assurance and intelligence mechanisms in place that underpin our improvement journey.

As outlined in several places, we believe that audit findings and associated performance and outcome measures demonstrate a positive direction of travel. Whilst we are continuously seeking improvement, we do, however, recognise there are some areas where we wish to improve more rapidly. A summary of our plans for doing so comprises the final section of this document.

#### Leadership, management, and governance

Leadership, management, and governance has been strengthened since the last Ofsted inspection. Effective leadership is driven through the DCS, the Lead Member for Social Care and Health Integration, and via Council and strategic partnership boards. These include the Health and Wellbeing Board, the BDSCB, the Corporate Parenting Group, and Corporate Performance, Strategy, and Assurance Groups.

The quality and impact of social work practice, including safeguarding activity, performance and outcomes are overseen by governance arrangements through the Strategic Development and Integration (SD&I) management group and through regular reports to the elected members.

Weekly meetings take place between the Lead Member for Health and Social Care Integration and the DCS, Operational and Commissioning Directors and members of the senior management team. This ensures performance and risks are shared, leading to a thorough understanding of activity, practice, and pressures.

Scrutiny is also provided by a wider group of elected members through the Children's Services Select Committee, with a recent review of adoption performance, and by the Chief Executive through Corporate Performance Group (CPG) and Corporate Assurance Group (CAG).

We have a strong working relationship with our independent safeguarding chairs, who were both appointed in 2017. The LSCB Chair, Lead Member, Leader of the Council, DCS, SAB Chair, Chief Executive and directors hold a quarterly safeguarding triggers meeting. This meeting considers both children's and adults' high-level safeguarding and workforce data, ensuring good understanding of performance and pressures on the system. This meeting also considers quality assurance reports and a case monitoring report on high-risk cases as well as progress on SCRs.

The Chief Executive meets regularly with the Chair of the Safeguarding Board which further enables him to secure assurance.

Quarterly challenge sessions are in place and quarterly performance reports covering children's social care are taken to corporate performance and assurance groups and Cabinet where appropriate.

The Children's Commissioning Director and Operational Director for children's care and support are held accountable to the DCS through regular performance and quality assurance reporting as well as through individual appraisal.

Within this strengthened context, significant resources have been invested into increasing and stabilising the children's social care workforce. A key part of the Council's transformation programme was the SAFE

programme, commencing in the summer of 2015 and operating up to April 2017. This programme led on a medium- to long-term plan to transform Children's Care and Support, with recruitment and retention at the heart of the programme.

A new children's brokerage service has been operational since September 2017. This brokerage service is responsible for coordinating and purchasing goods and services for children and young people. This service will in time free up social workers to focus on delivering front-line social care, ensure robust contracts are in place, help monitor the quality of provision.

The Council has implemented commissioning and operational service blocks to provide increased scrutiny, challenge, and support, as well as ensuring value for money. Commissioning mandates are in place to monitor and evaluate progress against service objectives and priorities subject to the leadership and management governance arrangements in place: reports to DCS and Lead Member and quarterly performance challenge sessions, with overarching assurance being discharged in the usual way through Cabinet, the Health and Wellbeing Board and Select Committees.

The impact of the investment in recruitment and retention is now being seen with a considerable reduction in agency levels<sup>82</sup>. This progress has been made across the service, particularly in recruiting permanent managers and all IROs are now permanent. The turnover rate has stabilised<sup>83</sup> and social worker absence remains low<sup>84</sup>.

The number of agency case-holding social workers remains higher than we would wish, particularly in the Assessment service. A plan of recruitment activity continues to address this as a priority, including an improved recruitment and retention offer<sup>85</sup> launched for all new staff in July 2017 and for existing staff in September 2017.

Recognising the complexity of the cases involved, we are working hard to ensure social workers have manageable caseloads and the ambition is to reduce this to 1:15 by 2020. Average social worker caseloads are generally lower than at the time of the 2014 inspection, though are beginning to rise.

Our new Safeguarding Board Chair has progressed work on the restructure of the Safeguarding Partnership and ensures that there is routine scrutiny of a wide range of activity and performance information. The Performance, Learning and Quality Assurance Committee (a subgroup of the LSCB) meets quarterly to consider safeguarding performance across the partnership and the main Board receives quarterly updates.

Our response to SCRs is robust and well managed. Recently completed SCRs have resulted in comprehensive multi-agency action plans and these have been effectively implemented. Thresholds are appropriately applied, and relevant processes are adhered to. The implementation of SCR Action Plans is routinely monitored at the highest level.

Findings from the serious case review for Child B were disseminated in 2015/16 and early 2016/17 to over 400 staff across the service and the associated Action Plan is now complete, with new services implemented as a result<sup>86</sup>.

The SCR report for Child C was published in January 2018. An improvement plan is being developed in response to the recommendations and will be monitored through the BDSCB for aspects pertinent to us.

The SCR on Family H is underway. This is a complex case expected to take up to 12 months to conclude. An Independent Chair of the SCR Panel has, therefore, been appointed to sit alongside the Independent Report Author, demonstrating robust and timely management and processes.

We have well-established processes in place to measure section 11 compliance and partner participation is good. Section 11 safeguarding audits are carried out bi-annually with an update from agencies in between. An LSCB 'challenge session' with partner agencies is in place to provide additional scrutiny. Action plans are

monitored through the Performance, Learning and Quality Assurance Committee and reported to the BDSCB. Overall, outcomes are positive, demonstrating a good understanding of safeguarding across all agencies. A designated individual with overall responsibility for safeguarding, with established lines of accountability up through the organisation, is also evident. Appropriate levels of safeguarding training are accessed by members of staff and safe recruitment processes are in place.

On a bi-annual basis, the BDSCB implements a school safeguarding audit relating to section 157/175 of the Children Act 2004 and compliant with statutory guidance: 'Keeping Children Safe in Education'. The audit tool is comprehensive and reflects the responsibility of schools and their staff to safeguard children. Overall, schools are demonstrating effective arrangements to safeguard children. All schools are fully compliant with recording and storing of information on child protection concerns and all schools have an 'e-safety' policy. Most schools submitting an audit understood the requirements of CSE, with 19% rated 'amber': an area of focus in the next audit.

Corporate parenting arrangements have been strengthened to ensure member representation, including the Lead Member and three councillors, through the Members Corporate Parenting Group (MCPG). The MCPG focuses on ensuring the promises made to our looked after children are kept, with members and officers working with our young people and partner services to make sure these are delivered.

The Children's Services Select Committee carried out a 9-month review of the adoption service and its performance in 2016/17, demonstrating leadership and senior management commitment to improvement. This review led to further workshops in November 2017 and January 2018 with members and senior managers to look further into the reasons for the decline in performance and how these issues might continue to be improved upon. An updated report was presented in January 2018.

## **Performance and quality assurance**

There is an effective and long-embedded performance management framework in place. As a result, all stakeholders at all levels of the organisation are routinely well briefed and have a sound grasp of performance and areas for improvement in social work. This forms a core part of briefings to the Director of Children's Services and Lead Members for Children's Services (LMCS). A refresh of the wider assurance processes i.e. how the organisation receives assurance that statutory duties are being effectively discharged was completed in 2017.

Operationally, effective arrangements are in place to ensure close monitoring and oversight of social work practice and performance. A weekly updated performance dashboard comprising of key performance measures and caseloads is available to all social workers and managers. Regular casework supervision provided within the service's Framework for Supervision along with independent oversight from the Independent Reviewing Officers.

Monitoring of key areas of performance and quality of practice for looked after children and care leavers is conducted through the Members Corporate Parenting Group (MCPG). The MCPG meets on a bi-monthly basis and is well attended by elected members and partners from health, social care, and education. The Council's Children's Rights and Participation Team have continued to attend and support the borough's Children in Care Council (Skittlz) at the MCPG meetings.

Data and performance on missing children is considered by the Missing Children Strategic Group and the BDSCB. Annual reports on missing children, CME and EHE are presented to BDSCB, including qualitative data around return home interviews and the reason children go missing. The Board appropriately monitors the identification and work undertaken with missing children, including those missing from care and missing from education.

The CME reviews every online form that is submitted with no school destination. The details of every child without an onward education destination are entered on our Children Missing Education database and the CME Officer works diligently to locate where they have gone to and will liaise with the family's new Local Authority.

The CME Officer uses a range of systems and agencies to locate where children missing from education have gone. The CME Officer has established a link with the UK Border Agency to share information about CME and is currently liaising with the Child Benefit Agency to be part of a pilot scheme to share information on CME.

Children missing education data is up to date and comprehensive including both those who live in borough and those who have left the borough. There are currently a low number (19) of children who live in the borough who are not in education.

To supplement this ongoing quantitative evaluation, there is also a well-embedded and robust audit and quality assurance framework and process in place. This has recently been reaffirmed in the new in the new Quality Assurance Strategy and Framework. This framework provides a comprehensive and robust quality assurance programme across Children's Care and Support and is used in conjunction with the Performance Management Framework to constantly assess the quality of practice and identify areas for improvement as a matter of business as usual. A quarterly audit and quality assurance report is produced and presented to the Corporate Assurance Group.

Bi-monthly learning audits are carried out by all managers and the IROs on allocated cases across the service. Audit work has become much more firmly embedded as an important part of improving social work practice. Findings are reported and actions for improvement recommended on individual cases, but also for practice across the service. Findings are also used within the performance management of individual staff and managers, in regular service performance meetings and in devising briefings, guidance and informing training programmes. The outcomes from multi-agency audits are reported to BDSCB Performance, Learning and Quality Assurance Committee.

Appropriate arrangements are in place to respond to statutory social care complaints. The number of complaints received has declined<sup>87</sup> indicating that the quality of social work practice is improving, and timeliness of response is improving<sup>88</sup>.

Full investigations are undertaken on all complaints. This is proven with the small number of cases which proceed to the next stage of the complaints procedure (just one stage 2 in 2016/17) and upon conclusion of this investigation, the complainant was satisfied with provided outcomes. Findings are disseminated to the staff involved and where appropriate to the wider audience of staff across the service. This has included feedback about the handling of sensitive personal data, the quality of assessment and arrangements for contact.

There is a fortnightly Practice Improvement and Outcomes Group (PIOG) for senior managers that focuses on policy, procedure, and practice improvement. This includes considering findings from audits and reviews and considering how best to embed the learning from these into everyday practice.

There are also monthly Quality Assurance and Performance management meetings, chaired by the Operational Director for Children's Care and Support.

At an operational level, we are focused on building a reputation for good and improving social work practice alongside a positive approach to staff support and development. During the last 18 months, significant steps have been taken to support social workers through training and the introduction of the model of attachment and relationship-based practice with input from Professor David Shemmings from the University of Kent. This fits well with existing 'strength-based' approaches used in the service's safeguarding work.

We are placing an increasing emphasis on learning from research and best practice. In 2016/17, Barking and Dagenham became a member of Research in Practice – both for children’s and adults’ services – which brings access to a wide range of relevant safeguarding research and different methods of teaching to support and underpin good practice.

Training, development, supervision and access to procedural guidance and research for social workers is a strong part of the Children’s Care and Support service’s support for improving the quality of practice and performance. Managers have received training in supervision in 2016/17 focusing more on reflection and ‘bringing the child into the room’ in casework discussions. Procedures are already in place on the Tri X online manual with links to the London Child Protection procedures and the BDSCB website. These continue to be reviewed and updated on a 6-monthly basis.

A set of expectations is in place for all staff, including managers, together with a supervision policy framework. The Safeguarding and Quality Assurance service has reinforced the requirement for IROs to check progress on actions in child protection and looked after children plans and raise practice alerts if necessary.

The programme of bi-monthly learning audits includes scrutiny of management oversight, supervision, decision making and independent oversight. Frequency and quality of supervision are part of the audit.

The culmination of the systems in place is that leaders have a clear understanding of the performance, pressures, and issues in – and impacting upon - social work. Demonstrable organisational responses – such as the investment made to improve recruitment and retention, or the commissioning of a new ESCR system – because of this, are evident.

#### 4. What are our plans for the next 12 months to maintain or improve practice?

We are strongly committed to improving social work practice in our area. Our plans for the next 12 months fall into two, broad categories. The first is to build on the foundation of the business-as-usual systems and processes that are in place and delivering the gradual improvements that are evident. The second is to introduce some new initiatives designed specifically to address some areas requiring improvement as identified in the SEF, alongside delivering the ambitious targets set-out within the Council's Transformation Programme.

We will continue the work to increase the stability and permanence of our social workforce. The existing recruitment and retention strategy will continue to be delivered as we seek to attract new social workers into the borough. Our approach to 'growing our own' social workers will be expanded, and we will push hard to attract social workers from overseas.

This will include securing a stable and experienced workforce made up of permanent social workers to deliver the consistency of social worker that our children and young people ask for by implementing an action plan designed to: recruit experienced social workers; convert our agency social workers to permanent positions; and grow our own via a strong newly qualified social worker (NQSW)/assessed and supported year in employment (AYSE) training programme. We will supplement these plans by running an EU recruitment campaign.

Two key planks of our recruitment strategy will continue to be our priority recruitment and key worker housing offer. Our priority recruitment offer is designed to encourage qualified social workers to join and stay for 5 years in LBBB by offering a £5k welcome payment in year 1, a £15k commitment payment after year 3, and 2 month paid sabbatical in years 4 and 5 to help protect our staff from burn out. Our key worker housing offer: This is designed to encourage qualified social workers to move into Barking and Dagenham by offering access to properties with large discounts to the market rate.

We are also committed to retaining and developing our staff, making Barking and Dagenham a place that social workers want to work. Our master class programme is designed to raise the professionalism of our social workers continues. Future topics include building relationships of trust to deliver change, financial scamming, humane social work when working with families, and autism and mental health. Our career progression framework clarifies social work values and competencies linked to management supervision and provides a very real pathway for talented social workers to progress.

We have recently worked with other nearby Council's to bid to become a Teaching Partnership. If successful, this will further strengthen the work we do in providing quality practice placements for students.

A key priority for recruitment and retention, but also on a much wider level is that of continuing to ensure manageable caseloads. This is an even greater challenge at a time of rising demand. Care and support planning for our children and young people needs to be of a high quality and must be social work led, and to achieve this we need social workers that have manageable caseloads (1:15), who are effectively supervised and supported by their manager.

Our new Community Solutions service for early intervention and preventions will become fully embedded during the coming year, and colleagues will be working hard to ensure this delivers the desired outcomes for our residents and reduces pressure on Children's Social Care services. We are in the process of developing a new Early Help and Early Intervention Strategy that will be the blueprint for how Early Intervention Service will set about supporting our families through challenging times and reducing the need for statutory services.

It is not just demand at the front-door that is rising. We are forecasting an increase in the number of children in care, and without effective planning this increase could quickly become unsustainable. Our new Looked

After Children and Care Leavers Sufficiency Plan 2018–2022 provides a sufficiency analysis and sets out our plans for meeting future demand.

This includes continuing the implementation of the Pause Practice for work with women who have had children removed and to prevent repeat removals; Caring Dads groupwork aimed at supporting fathers who are a source of safeguarding concerns to focus more on the needs of their children, and the expansion of Mockingbird which is a project aimed at supporting foster carers and improving placement stability for looked after children.

Plans to establish a Social Impact Bond (SIB) to fund critical edge-of-care services as part of our wider strategy to manage the number of children and young people in the care of the Council are at an advanced stage and will come to fruition next year.

We will also be continuing some key projects that are in train – several of which are discussed earlier in this document. Strengthening our Looked After Children Panel to ensure that it continues to focus on exploring all options for residential placement exit, fostering opportunities and providing management scrutiny

Our Children in Need project was designed to reduce social work caseloads by safely stepping down or closing children in need cases which no longer required social care involvement. The project aims to reach a position where social work caseloads within Care Management maintain a sustainable level.

We will continue our discussions with the East London Consortium and Coram to explore the introduction of the ‘fostering to adopt’ scheme further as consortium boroughs are experiencing the same reluctance from adopters to accept fostering to adopt arrangements.

The Council remains committed to exploring the opportunity to become part of the London Adoption Agency as part of the regionalisation agenda. Barking and Dagenham has agreed to join the Adopt London East regional hub scheduled to go live in April 2019 and we are actively involved in the planning meetings taking place to ensure the regional adoption agency will meet the needs of our children.

On a more prosaic note, we will move towards a more locality-based organisation of our social work teams, aligning them more closely with other professionals across the partnership to deliver a more integrated, holistic response. It is along these lines that close professional relationships will be formed with our flagship Early Intervention service, Community Solutions.

The recently established Brokerage function will be rolled-out across the service. This function will not only free-up valuable social work capacity but will also deliver efficiencies and greater value for money. Our new electronic social care recording system (Liquid Logic) will ‘go-live’ during the coming year, delivering a significantly improved case-management system for our social workers.

The Accommodation and Support Framework contract for young people leaving care was approved by Cabinet in May 2017 and will be live for new contracts from April 2018.

Work has begun to develop our implementation of the Children and Social Work Act (2017) and this will be an area of development during the coming year. In some areas, good progress is already being made. We have commissioned a care leavers app specifically built for local authorities to deliver the local offer. The care leavers app provides detailed advice and guidance on a wide range of subjects including entitlements, housing, money, and health and wellbeing – all delivered to the care leaver’s personal mobile device. The app will be available to care leavers on their smartphones and tablets, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, by April 2018.

The DCS has put the Council forward for a MASH peer challenge as part of the London Safeguarding Children Board improvement programme in early 2018, demonstrating the leadership and management commitment to our improvement journey and to ensure children are safeguarded and outcomes improved.



There are also areas of practice improvement – as discussed throughout this document – where, despite good progress being made, we know there is more to do. During the next 12 months we will seek to build on existing foundations to deliver continued improvements in these key areas. These will include:

- More routinely hearing the voice of the child in all social work interventions, and being relentless in our approach to ensuring that our children and young people are heard;
- We must continue to improve the quality of supervision and management oversight; assessments; planning and case recording to continue our journey toward being consistently good or better;
- Reducing the number of children in our care and improving permanency for and outcomes for these children and young people and our care leavers;
- Continue to deliver the plans already in place to improve the timeliness of adoptions<sup>89</sup>
- Ensuring that Council members and officers understand their corporate parenting responsibilities and act to provide the right support to our children in care and care leavers. This includes a strong and effective Corporate Parenting Board that effectively captures the voices of our children and young people.

To frame much of this activity, and in line with the new shape of the Council we will implement commissioning mandates and deliver improved outcomes alongside financial pressures and budget savings. Services that we buy will be ever more strongly linked to delivering the outcomes that are required, and these outcomes will be informed by the needs and wishes of the service user.

All of this must be considered within the context of meeting a key challenge: coping with increased demand at a time of financial constraint. We know that our population is growing and that pressure on Children's Social Care is increasing. Many of the strategies that we have developed – or are developing – have this at their core, and the coming 12 months will shape the Council's response to this most fundamental of challenges.

## Data Notes and Sources

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- <sup>1</sup> A total of 7,375 children are supported through CAFs, of which 2,711 are open. In 2017/18, the number of CAFs initiated across partner agencies is lower than previous years and this is being currently being reviewed on behalf of the children's safeguarding partnership LSCB. In Q3 2017/18, the number of CAFs initiated slightly increased to 113, compared with 99 in Q2. The Integrated Working Team are contacting CAF assessors to support the CAF process and to prevent case drift, primarily through the traded services agreements with schools. This will hopefully impact on CAF numbers for the rest of the year.
- <sup>2</sup> Social Care referrals received with a CAF in place is 16%: below the target set out in the current Early Help Strategy 2015–2018.
- <sup>3</sup> Health, Police, National Probation Service, Victim Support, and early help social workers are co-located in the MASH, enabling routine engagement in information sharing, including in strategy meetings. Virtual partners include Youth Offending Service, Housing, adults' social care and the Community Rehabilitation Company. The Missing Children Coordinator is also co-located within MASH.
- <sup>4</sup> All initial strategy meetings are held within 72 hours.
- <sup>5</sup> In 2017/18, social care contacts are remaining steady and consistent with previous years – around 9,000 annually with 38% of those contacts progressing to referral including MASH checks. The high percentage (94% plus) of referrals dealt with within the 24-hour timescales has been consistent for the last nine months. This is comparable with the 2016/17 year-end figure, but much higher than the 80% recorded in 2015/16.
- <sup>6</sup> 2,737 by Q3 this year compared to 1,965 in the same period last year: an increase of 39%. The borough's referral rate (505 per 10,000) remains in line with London and national rates and the proportion of referrals progressing to statutory assessment is stable at around 70%.
- <sup>7</sup> Performance in relation to repeat referrals within 12 months of a previous referral is good at 16% and is in line with London averages and below the national and similar area averages of 22% and 20%.
- <sup>8</sup> Audit rating: 73% of referrals as good, 21% as requires improvement and 6% inadequate.
- <sup>9</sup> August 2017 audit of assessments shows evidence of child's wishes and feelings within assessments, 77 % rated as 'good' and 4% as 'outstanding'.
- <sup>10</sup> August 2017 audit of assessment shows evidence of direct work, as indexed document, or as detailed case notes with 58% rated as 'good' or better.
- <sup>11</sup> Year to date assessments approved is 1,850, a 9% increase compared with Q3 2016/17. 84.5% of assessments completed and authorised within 45 days.
- <sup>12</sup> An overall reduction of 6% with the number of children in need cases dropping from 1,217 to 1,149. This reflected the focused work to progress numbers of children in need cases to closure or step down.
- <sup>13</sup> Children in Need case have risen to 651 compared with 529, a 23% rise between Q1 and Q3 this year. This increase is also due to the 95 children open to the new Project Palm team in response to Operation Palm (see below).
- <sup>14</sup> The latest audits graded child in need plans as 50% as good or outstanding, 43% as requiring improvement and 7% as inadequate. This is a good improvement on the April 2016 bi-monthly audits where 27% were graded as good or outstanding, 49% were requires improvement and 24% were inadequate.
- <sup>15</sup> 59% of strategy discussions include all relevant agencies and 88% cases had clear interim safety plans recorded. This compared to 91% of strategy discussions being conducted by a telephone discussion between children's social care and the police while 4% involved other agencies and only 14% of cases had clear interim safety plans in 2016. In both themed audits, the application of threshold and decision making was judged appropriate.
- <sup>16</sup> Audit findings: Increasing to 57% as at Q3 2017/18 compared with 40% in 2016/17 and only 8% in 2014/15. This corresponds with a decline in telephone-only strategy discussions, which are now at 27% compared with 53% in 2016/17 and 86% in 2014/15.

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- <sup>17</sup> The number of children subject to a child protection plan has increased to 347 (Q3) compared with 294 at end of year 2016/17. The rate per 10,000 is 56, which is higher than the London (39), national (43) and similar areas (47) rates.
- <sup>18</sup> A lower proportion (12%) of children are subject to a child protection plan for the second or subsequent time than England, London, and similar areas.
- <sup>19</sup> An audit undertaken in Sept 2017 evidenced significant improvement in the contribution of all relevant professionals, a clear record on file and threshold decisions are judged as 'good'.
- <sup>20</sup> 91% of initial child protection case conferences held within the 15-day timescale. This is significantly higher than all comparators (between 75% and 77%).
- <sup>21</sup> Although improvements are being reported with police attendance at initial child protection conferences at 93% for the year to date, attendance at review is low at 8%. Overall, attendance is at 34% compared with 16% at the point of the 2014 inspection. Child protection case conferences at which there was no police attendance show a 99% rate of police supplying reports. GPs attendance at child protection case conferences, however, has not improved and is very low at 0% in 2017/18 up to Q3 with only 20% of reports shared.
- <sup>22</sup> Over 90% stating that the conference was chaired very well, decision making on the type of plan was right and that a safe and thorough plan was out in place. 100% fed back that the conference resulted in clear understanding of concerns. 80% of professionals said they provided a written report to the conference.
- <sup>23</sup> Over 90% stating that they understood the concerns for their child, that the conferences helped them to better understand concerns and that the conference was chaired very well. Nine parents out of 17 (53%) said the social worker did not meet with them to share the conference report while 85% fed back that the chairs did.
- <sup>24</sup> 95% of children visited and seen within 4 weeks: a good improvement on end of year outturn of 86% in 2016/17.
- <sup>25</sup> 5 children on plans for 2 years or more as at Q3 2017/18 out of a total of 347 children on plans (1.4%).
- <sup>26</sup> 12% (28 children) compared with 6.5% at end of 2016/17 due to this effective review work.
- <sup>27</sup> Over 70% graded as good in the January and September 2017 bi-monthly audits compared with 47% in September 2016. The audits have shown a reduction in plans graded as requires improvement from 43% to 28%. No child protection plans were rated as inadequate in the last audit.
- <sup>28</sup> Recorded on the 'Court Tracker'. This contains data on the number of cases in pre-proceedings and the date which each case is reviewed to prevent drift.
- <sup>29</sup> At Q3 2017/18, 95 children were open to the team subject to assessment and CiN status with an average caseload of 32. The caseloads reflect the different nature of the work being undertaken in this team.
- <sup>30</sup> LAC numbers reduced from 457 to 409 in 2016/17. As of December 2017, there were 416 looked after children and demand is stable. The rate per 10,000 has fallen from 80 to 66 during that period, in line with statistical neighbours but higher than national (62) and London (50) rates. Based on current trends, the predicted year-end number of looked after children is 407.
- <sup>31</sup> Seventy-nine children (19%) were placed with agency foster carers at end of 2016/17 compared with 123 children (27%) at year end 2013/14. The number is lower at 62 (15%) in Q3 2017/18.
- <sup>32</sup> At the end of 2016/17, the fostering service provided in-house foster carers for 205 looked after children compared with 203 in 2015/16. There were 334 available placements at the end of 2016/17, comparable with 2015/16, as was the number of fostering households at 148.
- <sup>33</sup> A total of 339 (82%) children were placed in family-based care through foster care, placement with adoptive carers or placement with parents as of March 2017, no change on the year before. Year-to-date proportions remain comparable.
- <sup>34</sup> 62% of children are placed outside of borough, but the majority of those – 80% – are placed within 20 miles of Barking and Dagenham. Most of the children placed out of borough are placed in surrounding local authorities.

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- <sup>35</sup> A reduction from 35 (8.4%) to 33 (8.0%) over the course of the year. At the beginning of April 2015 there were 45 children in residential care and a lot of work was undertaken to bring this number down to 35 at the beginning of April 2016. As at Q3 2017/18, 26 (6%) children are placed in residential placements.
- <sup>36</sup> Current levels of Children in Care under section 20 are 20%, below England, London, and similar areas.
- <sup>37</sup> In 2016/17, 45 children entered care on police protection, representing 22% of all children entering care compared with 54 (25%) in 2015/16 and 134 (43%) in 2013/14. This reduction is being sustained this year with 31 children entering care on police protection – 20% of all admissions into care as at Q3.
- <sup>38</sup> From 33% in 2014 to 55% in Q3 2017/18.
- <sup>39</sup> In 2016/17 the number of care proceedings increased to 82 compared with 62 in 2015/16 and 37 in 2014/15. This increase is continuing with 65 children in care proceedings up to Q3 2017/18.
- <sup>40</sup> The average length of care proceedings (in weeks) has reduced to 31 weeks in 2014-17, compared to 32 weeks in 2013-16, 43 weeks in 2012-15; 53 weeks (2011-14) and a high 62 weeks in 2010-13.
- <sup>41</sup> Over 90% of the children benefiting from these interventions in 2014/15 remained out of the care system by May 2016. These figures indicate good targeting and effective interventions.
- <sup>42</sup> Six-weekly visits have increased to 85% and 3-monthly visits are up to 94% compared to 75% and 87% respectively at end of year 2016/17.
- <sup>43</sup> 72% rated as good in the September 2017 audit compared with 52% in September 2016. The proportion graded as requires improvement has reduced to 24% compared with 44% during the same time.
- <sup>44</sup> 90% graded as good.
- <sup>45</sup> 70% graded as good and 20% outstanding.
- <sup>46</sup> 96%
- <sup>47</sup> 95% on time at the end of the year 2016/17 and on average over 90% in 2017/18. This is above the national (90%), London (91%) and statistical neighbour (88%) averages.
- <sup>48</sup> IRO independent oversight and challenge was graded as requires improvement in 70% of cases and 10% inadequate in the thematic audit on care planning and permanency (November 2017).
- <sup>49</sup> 10% at end of March 2017, in line with England, but lower than London and statistical neighbours. As at Q3 2017/18, performance is 7% and year end prediction is 10%.
- <sup>50</sup> 61% of children aged up to 16 in the same placement for 2 years or more, lower than all benchmarks.
- <sup>51</sup> Health Assessments completed within timescale is 90% and is above national, London and similar area averages.
- <sup>52</sup> 75% - in line with the looked after children England average.
- <sup>53</sup> A lower proportion of looked after children experiencing difficulties year on year since 2014, reducing from 14.9 to 13.1 in 2017, below England, London, and statistical neighbour average scores.
- <sup>54</sup> 5.0% of our looked after children (aged 10 and above) were convicted or subject to a final reprimand during 2016 (a rank of 33rd in England), which is comparable with England, while 3.0% of our looked after children were identified as having a substance misuse problem during 2016 (a rank of 31st in England), lower than the England average of 4.0%.
- <sup>55</sup> Around 24 annually and the number assessed is around 22.
- <sup>56</sup> The proportion of school-age looked after children with an up to date PEP has improved to 95%.
- <sup>57</sup> 55% now rated as good compared to 38% previously and the proportion rated as requires improvement has reduced to 44% compared to 56% during 2017.
- <sup>58</sup> In 2016 this was 3%, lower than the national rate of 4%.<sup>58</sup>
- <sup>59</sup> 7.8% compared to the national average of 10.4% (2015 data).

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- <sup>60</sup> 55% of looked after children achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and maths, much higher than the national average of 25%
- <sup>61</sup> From the most recent Looked After Children Survey. LAC reporting that their social worker listens to them and takes their views seriously (73% in 2017 vs 55% in 2016); the ability to contact their social worker (81% in 2017 vs 71% in 2016), knowing who to contact if their social worker is unavailable (73% in 2017 vs 67% in 2016), and knowing how to make a complaint (86% in 2017 vs 79% in 2016).
- <sup>62</sup> At 31% this is much lower than the national average of 47%, London average of 44% and statistical neighbour average of 41%.
- <sup>63</sup> This is above the London average of 9% and either above or in line with our consortium partners.
- <sup>64</sup> All 75 children adopted in 2013–16 are still with their adoptive families, as are the 14 children adopted in 2016/17.
- <sup>65</sup> 14 compared with 27 in 2015/16.
- <sup>66</sup> Currently, we have 10 children (seven up to end of Q3, three in January) who have been adopted and 15 children placed for adoption. 2017/18 timeliness for A1 and A2 is expected to improve to 503 days and 246 days respectively and, although still above timescale thresholds, this performance would be around 21 months better for A1 and 10 months for A2 compared with 2016/17, closing the gap on national thresholds. We are, therefore, expecting to see the impacts of some of the improvement work on the 2017–19 scorecard and beyond.
- <sup>67</sup> To 45 in 2016/17 (37 in 2015/16) and a further 28 this year. The total number of children on SGOs is 246.
- <sup>68</sup> In the last year, 73% of cases audited were rated as good, 18% as requires improvement and 9% as outstanding.
- <sup>69</sup> 'Unknowns are at 5.6%. This is better than England (6%) and only slightly behind London (5.3%)
- <sup>70</sup> Current performance demonstrates further improvement with 57.4% of care leavers in EET. In 2016/17, 26% of care leavers were NEET, lower than London, national and statistical neighbours.
- <sup>71</sup> In 2016/17, 17 young people attended university and our current number is 21.
- <sup>72</sup> Numbers increased to 42 (10.4%) in 2016/17 as part of plans to move towards leaving care and adulthood compared with 32 young people (7%) at the end of 2015/16. The Q3 position is 39 (9.4%) and we predict to increase further by year end.
- <sup>73</sup> 81%
- <sup>74</sup> This year nine young people have been supported to move into social housing voids and seven young people have been supported to move into more suitable accommodation. The Council is purchasing properties on the open market to provide additional properties for our young people leaving care. Five care leavers have moved into one of these properties since the beginning of November 2017 with another 5 placements in train. It is planned to purchase 30 such properties.
- <sup>75</sup> In 2016/17, 163 missing children with 406 missing episodes compared with 172 missing children with 316 episodes in 2015/16. As at Q3 this year, 90 children have been reported missing and a total of 185 missing episodes demonstrating a significant reduction this year.
- <sup>76</sup> The year to date number is 52 with a total of 141 missing episodes compared to 72 and 257 missing episodes in 2016/17. As a proportion of children missing from care, this has increased to 9% in 2017, but this remains below the national average of 10%.
- <sup>77</sup> A recent analysis of this work concluded that 87% of children without an allocated social worker, who went missing, received a return home interview and that 76.6% of these children did not go missing again.
- <sup>78</sup> 86.5% of missing children not previously known to care had a return home interview and 46% of looked after children had a return home interview.
- <sup>79</sup> Circulated to: the DCS, senior managers and key staff in Children's Care and Support, MASH, secondary school safeguarding leads and Mayesbrook Park School, the Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Coordinator; school nursing (NELFT), youth offending, the education inclusion team, the education healthcare team, the virtual school, the Children's Rights Officer, the police schools team and the 14–19 careers service.

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- <sup>80</sup> 170 in 2016/17 compared with 185 in the previous year. Of these 170, 33 cases met the threshold for LADO investigation and 137 were considered consultations where threshold was not met.
- <sup>81</sup> In 2017/18 up to Q3, there has been an increase with 177 LADO allegations to date; 56 where threshold was deemed met at the point of contact and 121 deemed consultations where threshold was not met.
- <sup>82</sup> In 2016/17, 38% of vacancies across all social work qualified posts were covered by agency staff compared with 50% in 2015/16, 48% in 2014/15 and 55% in 2013/14.
- <sup>83</sup> 21% compared with 35% in 2014/15.
- <sup>84</sup> Below 1% compared with 3.5% across England (DfE social care workforce return 2016/17).
- <sup>85</sup> Comprising of a £5k welcome payment, a £15k commitment payment after year 3, and a 2-month paid sabbatical to be taken in years 4 and 5.
- <sup>86</sup> This included guidance about practice for pre-birth assessments, training about working with fathers, and further communication about resources for working with domestic abuse and substance misuse. The Caring Dads Programme is aimed at helping fathers value their children and make positive changes in their parenting. To date, the programme has supported 15 fathers.
- <sup>87</sup> 126 in 2015/16 to 98 in 2016/17. The year-to-date number is 83.
- <sup>88</sup> 82% of complaints responded to within timescale (Q3 2017/18).
- <sup>89</sup> Plans to improve adoption performance and practice are: to increase the Central List for Adoption Panel; to ensure plans for the recruitment of adopters encourage applicants to meet the diverse range of children's needs; to performed a detailed case-by-case scrutiny of planning and timescales to ensure that appropriate cases are progressed in a timely way and tracked; to ensure all children have a contingency plan; and to monitor and review arrangements regarding special guardianship and the support plans for these given the increasing numbers.