

Children's Care and Support

OFSTED Improvement Plan

Our plan for improving Children's Social Care Services in Barking and Dagenham in response to OFSTED ILACS Inspection findings and recommendations

One borough; one community; no one left behind

Introduction

The Ofsted inspection of Barking and Dagenham's Children's Social Care Services took place between 18th February and 1st March 2019. The final OFSTED report formally setting out their findings was published on 1 April 2019.

The inspection judged services in Barking and Dagenham to be 'requires improvement to be good'. This judgement was consistent with our self-evaluation submitted to OFSTED as part of the new inspection framework pre-inspection activity.

The Improvement Plan for Children's Care and Support Services has been developed in response to the Ofsted report findings, covering the 6 specific recommendations set out below, but also addressing all areas for improvement highlighted in our letter from OFSTED.

This high-level plan sets out the key actions we will take over the next 18 months to address those recommendations and areas for improvement and to ensure outcomes improve for vulnerable children, young people and families in Barking and Dagenham. Ultimately,

We aim to deliver consistently good services for children, young people and their families and our

ambition is to be good by the time of our next inspection.

This plan forms just part of a wider programme of improvement for Children's Services that the Council is embarking upon. The Children's Improvement Programme, described in this document, sets out our intentions for improvement beyond simply responding to inspection recommendations. Our plan is to deliver real transformation that delivers improved outcomes for our most vulnerable children and young people built upon the foundation of a sustainable care system.

Our Children's Improvement Board, chaired by the DCS and multi-agency in its composition, will oversee the delivery of our plans. The Children's Improvement Board will be responsible for ensuring all recommendations are responded to and acted upon. The Board will report into the existing corporate governance mechanisms responsible for all Council transformation activity and programmes. It will meet monthly to provide oversight and challenge, and our progress will be formally monitored at all levels of the organisation.

The remainder of this document sets out the inspection findings, our high-level plan for responding to these and how we will organise ourselves to deliver upon our ambitious plans.

What did OFSTED find and what do they say we must do?

The OFSTED letter contained 6 recommendations where improvement is required...

1. The quality, management oversight and impact of early help services.
2. The quality and effectiveness of management oversight and supervision to ensure that children's circumstances improve within their timeframe.
3. The timeliness and effectiveness of public law outline (PLO) arrangements.
4. Planning for children placed with parents.
5. The strategic relationship with health services, and operational delivery across a range of health functions.
6. The provision of help for children living with domestic abuse, or in neglectful circumstances.

- ✓ Strong and effective senior leadership
- ✓ Rapid progress being made – particularly in the last 6 months
- ✓ Accurate self-assessment – leaders know their organisation
- ✓ MASH and EDT found to be strong
- ✓ Work with vulnerable adolescents at risk of exploitation
- ✓ Social Workers have strong relationships with children
- ✓ Work with children on the edge of care
- ✓ Strong LADO arrangements and those for children missing education
- ✓ Strong fostering and adoption services

- ❖ Consistency and quality of assessment and plans
- ❖ Planning for early permanence needs to be better
- ❖ Health arrangements for Children in Care and Care Leavers
- ❖ Tackling Domestic Abuse – particularly perpetrators
- ❖ Access to CAMHS
- ❖ Management oversight in the Assessment Service
- ❖ High caseloads – particularly in the Assessment Service
- ❖ Early Help and responding to children living with neglect
- ❖ Quality of Special Guardianship Assessments

...and the detail of the letter highlights other areas in need of improvement, as well as a number of strengths...



Improvement Plan

Ofsted Recommendation 1. Improve the quality, management oversight and impact of early help services.

Action Description		Operational Leads	By When	Outcome (Success Criteria)	Key Measures (how will we know we are making a difference?)
1.1	Commission independent best practice review of Early Help offer and services that looks at needs, thresholds, pathways and impact on vulnerable children outcomes and underpins local improvement plan for council and partnership early help services, in line with Ofsted and other key findings.	Director of Community Solutions Director of Commissioning, Children's Care and Support (CC&S)	December 2019	A fit for purpose early help services and offer that delivers preventable services that make a sustainable difference to children's outcomes More children and families are supported through targeted Early Help, and as result less children require statutory intervention.	Increase use of Early Help assessments. Increase in the percentage of children and families referred into children's social care with evidence of early help support or interventions previously. Repeat referrals and multiple assessments remain low and in line with London.
1.2	Extend the Children's Care and Support QA framework into early help and realign capacity with Safeguarding and Quality Assurance function in Children's Care and performance functions.	Director of Community Solutions Director of Commissioning (CC&S)	December 2019	Children and families receive timely support underpinned by a robust assessment and plan, with a named lead professional and robust multi agency working arrangements (i.e. team around a family).	Step up and step-down measures: Cases that are stepped up are deemed appropriate and step-down cases result in timely and targeted Early Help intervention that supports sustained change.
1.3	Continue to monitor impact and effectiveness of MASH and Early Help services through enhanced local assurances arrangements such as scrutiny and new safeguarding board arrangements.	Director of Community Solutions	Ongoing	Improved pathways and joint assessments with housing and social care. A fully embedded quality assurance model which can evidence services and support is making a difference to children and families outcomes and experiences.	Dip sampling audit activity shows the partnership understands referral pathways for homeless 16-and-17-year olds. Increase the number of joint assessments with housing and social care for 16-17-year olds.
1.4	Revise, publish and adopt a new homeless 16 - 17-year old protocol in line with national guidance including clear referral pathways for partners and regular audit schedule for compliance.	Director of Community Solutions	September 2019	Multi agency early help	

1.5	To extend social care workforce and practice developments into early help services, such as reflective supervision, professional standards and improvements in child's led experience.	Director of Community Solutions	April 2020	services are underpinned by robust individual and cross cutting performance management frameworks, including more robust approaches to commissioning and monitoring of services.	Increase in Early Help audits graded as good or outstanding demonstrating effective support and interventions.
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Ofsted Recommendation 2: The quality and effectiveness of management oversight and supervision to ensure that children's circumstances improve within their timeframes

Action Description	Operational Lead	By When	Outcome (Success Criteria)	Key Measures (how will we know we are making a difference?)	
2.1	Enhance capacity in line with the local plan in the Assessment Service to improve caseloads, allocations and increased management oversight.	Director of Operations (CC&S)	July 2019	Work is allocated, caseloads are lower and safer. Improved early permanence for new-borns and younger children.	Average Caseloads - weekly Caseload Dashboard to show number of children and families and case type per social worker, ASYE and student are within local authority average.
2.2	Implement revised TOM that includes strengthened and specialist capacity in line with practice improvement areas, such as pre-birth, targeted intervention hub and adolescents at risk.	Director of Operations (CC&S)	April 2020	More permanent, less turnover in both permanent and agency staff in a workforce where staff can progress and flourish. Staff report feeling supported to effectively deliver their roles.	Increase in permanent workers and reduction in turnover. Reduced repeat referrals and/or multiple assessments; A lower conversion of s.47 resulting in NFA; A higher proportion of cases going to ICPC resulting in plans; Data highlighting consistent application of threshold across all assessment teams.
2.3	Deliver an enhanced quality assurance framework and approaches that drive consistency in improving the child's lived experience, that is timely, meets their needs, and supported by good quality direct work, supervision and management oversight.	Director of Operations (CC&S) Director of Commissioning, Children's Care and Support (CC&S)	Ongoing	Children and families support is delivered at a pace that best meets their needs and understands their lived experience, and what needs to change for them	Improvements in timeliness of S47s, strategy meetings, time open. Assessment timeliness.

2.4	New monthly front-line manager practice learning sessions, including practice observations, to focus on topics which include quality analysis, meaningful exploration of culture and identity, quality supervision and management oversight, understanding child's lived experience to ensure consistency of practice and effectiveness. (including compilation of exemplars of good practice).	Director of Operations (CC&S)	Ongoing	Audit and practice observation shows consistently that children and families are getting timely help, that the child's lived experience is improving, risks are reduced and that social workers are delivering good quality direct work, support by good quality management oversight and supervision	<p>Increase in the number of children seen, seen alone and without delay, where purposeful direct work is evident.</p> <p>Transfer dashboard shows no delay in cases moving through system including step up and step down.</p> <p>Increases in number and percentage of open cases with supervision in the month. 'Multiple entry matrix' with all key measures.</p>
2.5	Introduce new formalised checkpoints to improve consistency for children within statutory process such as CIN and CP to monitor impact plan and reduce likeliness of drift and delay.	Director of Operations (CC&S)	September 2019	Better decision making resulting in fewer children subject to multiple episodes of intervention and more sustainable and permanent outcomes	Audits show management oversight increases and supervision is regular, timely and of good quality i.e. purposeful, reflective and analytical.
2.6	Improve the quality of child protection plans to ensure they are SMART and include clear actions multi agency core group updates showing progress.	Head of Quality Assurance (CC&S)	Quarterly from April 2019	<p>Feedback from staff, through annual survey of supervision shows improvements in them feeling supported and challenged.</p> <p>CIN and CP plans and decisions are SMART and influenced by multi agency core groups.</p>	<p>Length of time children and young people are subject to a Children in Need (CIN) and Child Protection (CP) plan is congruent with need and not influenced by lack of provision of services.</p> <p>Reduction in children on a CiN plan - better step down process.</p> <p>Increase in audits demonstrating CP plan quality good or better with clear actions. Compliance monitored by IROs and performance management meeting.</p> <p>Increase in CP core groups in timescale.</p>

Ofsted Recommendation 3. The timeliness and effectiveness of public law outline (PLO) arrangements.

Action Description		Operational Lead	By When	Outcome (Success Criteria)	Key Measures (how will we know we are making a difference?)
3.1	Establish a monthly Permanence Taskforce to drive systematic improvements and robust single oversight of permanence arrangements and commissioned services for children at every stage of their journey, ensure critical challenge, monitor progress and ensure consistent application of thresholds.	Director of Operations (CC&S)	May 2019	<p>Consistent and timely application of PLO thresholds in line with child's lived experiences.</p> <p>All staff can articulate what permanence means for a child and how we support and manage this in Barking and Dagenham.</p>	<p>Data reporting shows all cases in pre-proceedings PLO process are subject to CP plan.</p> <p>Reduction in number of pre-proceedings cases going over 16 weeks and care proceedings going over 26 weeks.</p> <p>A reduction in number of Supervision Orders.</p>
3.2	Produce a PLO performance dashboard to track and report on timeliness and outcomes for both pre-proceedings and care proceedings activity for Legal SMT and for the Permanence Taskforce.	Head of Performance and Intelligence (CC&S)	June 2019	<p>Overall improvement in timeliness and oversight in PLO work i.e. reduction in average time taken to complete an assessment.</p>	<p>Reduction in the number of children going through proceedings more than once.</p> <p>Audit shows evidence that pre-proceedings was purposeful supporting "front loading" for care proceedings, driving more timely conclusions in proceedings.</p>
3.3	Develop, train and roll out the Business Processes and Workflows of the 'Legal Workspace' in Liquid Logic to support greater management oversight for Heads of Service to monitor pace of progress.	Head of Performance and Intelligence (CC&S)	December 2019	<p>Children are safe and achieve stability in their 'forever after home' in a more timely way .</p> <p>Improvements in early permanence work underpinned by parallel planning so as not to delay children being placed in their 'forever after home' .</p>	<p>Audits demonstrate consistently that quality of supervision is better and managers are listening to social workers.</p>
3.4	CAFCASS to attend legal SMT ensuring stronger links with the Courts.	Director of Operations (CC&S)	May 2019	<p>Consistently improved quality of viability and SGO assessments so that family members are assessed well and in a timely way and less</p>	<p>Reduction in the number and percentage of children entering care via police protection.</p>
3.6	Commence an urgent independent and systematic review of all current PLO - pre- proceedings cases	Head of Quality Assurance (CC&S)	April 2019		<p>All children have a clear permanence plan recorded on LiquidLogic LCS.</p>

	focusing on progress, quality of practice and thresholds.			breakdowns of SGO placements .	Senior IRO leading on tracking and monitoring permanence. Fewer IRO escalations demonstrating drive in achieving permanence. Placement stability performance measures. Audits demonstrate consistently good or better viability and SGO assessments. Audits highlight comprehensive genograms at outset of assessments with outcome of family members being assessed in a timely way to ensure permanence is not delayed. PLO is not slowed down due to delay in commissioning assessments.
3.7	Revise local process to ensure all cases in pre-proceedings PLO are also subject to a CP plan.	Head of Safeguarding (CC&S)	July 2019		
3.9	Improve the quality of viability and SGO assessments through workforce development and strengthening the tools and processes of the SGO team to deliver assessments that are analytical and SMART.	Head of Service for Looked After Children, Adoption & Prevention Services (CC&S)	December 2019		
3.10	Embed the new permanence policy setting out standards, expectations and support for all social workers and managers to improve permanence practice.	Director of Operations (CC&S)	April 2020		

Ofsted Recommendation 4. Planning for children placed with parents.

Action Description		Operational Lead	By When	Outcome (Success Criteria)	Key Measures (how will we know we are making a difference?)
4.1	Increase oversight through the Permanence Taskforce of children placed with parents and plans for revocation of care orders. This will lead to timely consideration of discharge of care orders.	Head of Service for Looked After Children, Adoption & Prevention Services (CC&S)	Ongoing	Improved planning and reviews for children placed at home with parents. Timely applications and disposal of revocation orders supporting children and young people to achieve permanence.	Overview of number and % of children placed with parents. Audits highlight timely and effective reviews of children placed with parents with reduced re-entries into care.
4.2	IROs to chair disruption meetings to improve planning for children reducing risk of children drifting home.	Head of Quality Assurance (CC&S)	April 2020		Audit activity highlights children are returning home in a planned way.

4.3	Improve compliance through workforce training on placement with parents' regulations.	Director of Operations (CC&S)	December 2019		Data report indicating timescales for achieving revocation orders.
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Ofsted Recommendation 5. The strategic relationship with health services, and operational delivery across a range of health functions.

Action Description		Operational Lead	By When	Outcome (Success Criteria)	Key Measures (how will we know we are making a difference?)
5.1	Extend senior health leaders from CCG and provider to attend Children's Care and Support monthly Improvement Board chaired by DCS	DCS	July 2019	Children and families receive timely and effective CAMHS support and interventions Increased CAMHS provision	Higher percentage of Initial Health and Review Health assessments completed in timescales. Higher percentage of notifications and sending paperwork from social care to health completed in timescales (within 5 working days of the child becoming looked after).
5.2	Ensure new opportunities presented by new working together embed local strategic and operational partnership working arrangements, underpinned by robust governance, quality and performance frameworks across CCG, LA and shared bodies such as safeguarding and health and wellbeing boards	Executive Director Integrated Care and Transformation, North East London NHS Foundation Trust DCS Managing Director BHR CCGs	September 2019	More disabled young people and LAC benefit from CAMHS support. Children and young people have timely access to health services and this will lead to improved health outcomes. More LAC benefit from CAMHS support. Improved therapies (esp. Speech and Language Therapy).	Reduction in the number of missed health assessment appointments for looked after children. Improved emotional wellbeing - SDQ scores for looked after children. Audits demonstrate improved access for disabled young people (CiN, CP and LAC)
5.3	Extend Children's Care and Support QA framework and audit to health activity and impact, where possible through joint audits and agreed standards.	Nurse Director, Barking & Dagenham, Havering and Redbridge CCGs.	September 2019	More care leavers to have a full health history. Improved health provision for care leavers, including mental	Access to CAMHS - waiting times performance measures. Increase in care leavers with a health passport and evidence that they receive a copy.

5.4	Co-locate health and social care staff to improve the timeliness of IHAs.	Designated Nurse Safeguarding and Looked After Children BHR CCG Director of Operations (CC&S)	June 2019	health service. All care leavers to have a health passport. Stronger challenging Corporate Parenting Group with a clear focus on EET and health particularly.	IRO to check compliance and escalate as required.
5.5	Develop and implement new IHA process, pathways and performance dashboard to improve timeliness.	Head of Performance and Intelligence (CC&S)	June 2019		
5.6	Assess and review the CAMHS demand and capacity as part of CAMHS transformation with a particular focus of looked after children and care leavers.	Director of Transformation and Planned Care CCG	October 2019		
5.7	Ensure that all Social Care teams involved with LAC are aware of specific LAC role in the local CAMHS service and that staff members know how self/professional referral can be made, or advice sought if YP declines a CAMHS referral	Director of Transformation and Planned Care CCG	May 2019		
5.8	Redesign and modernise the health passport with care leavers, underpinned by a robust audit to understand variation and compliance, led jointly with health (commissioning and provider) and the Local Authority.	Designated Nurse Safeguarding and Looked After Children BHR CCG Director of Operations (CC&S)	December 2019		

5.9	Undertake a Public Health Needs Assessment on vulnerable looked after children and care leavers and implement recommendations.	Director of Public Health	November 2019		
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Ofsted Recommendation 6. The provision of help for children living with domestic abuse, or in neglectful circumstances.

Action Description		Operational Lead	By When	Outcome (Success Criteria)	Key Measures (how will we know we are making a difference?)
6.1	Implement the Graded Care Profile 2 to support better risk identification and assessment in cases of neglect – supporting the social worker to fully understand the impact of the neglect on the child and their lived experience.	Head of Quality Assurance (CC&S) LSCB	April 2020	Strengthened quality assurance and independent oversight of early help audit and scrutiny	Improved Quality Assurance framework Audits demonstrate children living with neglect and domestic abuse are improving. Reduction in children and families requiring high risk domestic abuse support. Perpetrators report they have stopped using abusive behaviours.
6.2	Implement New Targeted Intervention Hub to focus on tackling Domestic Abuse, neglect and edge of care e.g. Father's Matters, FSW provision and refocus of edge of care of SIB.	Director of Operations (CC&S)	July 2020	Stronger performance management arrangements in Early Help. Children and families receive targeted and specific domestic abuse support and interventions.	
6.3	Review and agree with statutory partners the local approach to neglect and domestic abuse, and in conjunction with other local developments including DV commission and tender for new DA strategic partner in order that local offer best meets the needs of vulnerable children and their families and includes perpetrator programmes.	Safeguarding Partners	April 2020	Improved Domestic Abuse provision to match the level of need. Increase in number of perpetrators completing specific Domestic Abuse programmes.	
6.4	Improve pathway and joint working between DV, adult mental health, and substance misuse services.	Commissioning Director Adults Care & Support	December 2019		

The OFSTED Plan and the Children's Improvement Programme

The Children's Improvement Programme brings together our published response to OFSTED (the OFSTED Improvement Plan) together with all elements of improvement activity into a single

