

# Report of the Strategic Director Children's Services to the meeting of Children Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee to be held on – 1<sup>st</sup> March 2023

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## Subject: Bradford Children's Services Improvement Plan

### Summary statement:

The Bradford Children's Services Improvement Plan has strong leadership and assurance mechanisms in place. Support from the Chief Executive, elected members, the emerging Children and Families Trust, partners and senior leaders, ensures focus, drive and pace.

The new plan commenced in April 2022 and was commissioned and is governed by the refreshed Bradford Children's Improvement Board, which is chaired by the Bradford Commissioner.

The plan has most recently been presented and discussed at the Improvement Board which took place on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2023. The board meets every six weeks.

The areas for improvement identified in the recent Ofsted inspection (ILACS), resulting in Bradford being judged to be Inadequate overall, inform the Improvement Plan.

This report is to present an update on the Improvement Plan and Progress Report to Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

### EQUALITY & DIVERSITY:

There is not a dedicated strand for equality and diversity consideration, they are considered and addressed throughout the strands, objectives and the success measures in the plan.

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**Portfolio:**

**Children & Families**

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**Overview & Scrutiny Area:**

**Children's Services**

## 1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Children's Services Improvement Plan has strong leadership and assurance mechanisms in place. Support from the Chief Executive, elected members, partners and senior leaders ensures focus, drive and pace. The plan has most recently been presented and discussed at the Improvement Board which took place on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2023.
- 1.2 The new plan commenced in April 2022 and was commissioned and is governed by the refreshed Bradford Children's Improvement Board, which is chaired by the Bradford Commissioner.
- 1.3 The areas for improvement identified in the recent Ofsted inspection (ILACS), resulting in Bradford being judged to be Inadequate overall, inform the Improvement Plan.
- 1.4 This report is to present an update on the Improvement Plan and Progress Report to Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

## 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Improvement Plan is in two halves and enables a relentless focus on improving outcomes for children and young people and ensuring that those supporting them and their families have the right conditions in place to provide quality services and for success.

### *A - Improving the lives of children and young people:*

1. Who are referred to our Front Door
2. Who need early help
- 3a. Who are in need of help and protection
- 3b. With disabilities (new from January 2023)
4. Who are on the edge of care (to include a Turning the Curve plan to safely reduce the number of children needing to be looked after)
5. Who are in care and who have left care

### *B - Creating the conditions for success:*

6. Ensuring children, young people and families have voice and influence
7. Strategic leadership ensuring the conditions for success are created
8. A sufficient and stable workforce
9. A constant focus on practice improvement and an agreed practice model
10. A strong and collaborative partnership
11. Buildings, IT, finance, admin. HR support and equipment that support quality practice
12. Data and Insight (Learning and improving through performance management and quality assurance)

- 2.1 The Improvement Plan has identified measures for success; these success measures (data and milestones) are reported on quarterly and presented to the Improvement Board in the form of the Progress Report.

- 2.2 The Improvement Board have requested that the way data tables represent success are altered, to provide more contextual information about benchmarked or target measures where this is possible. These amendments have been made for the Quarter 3 report.
- 2.2 The draft Improvement Plan and Quarter 3 Progress Report are available in *11 – Appendices* of this report.
- 2.3 The plan is iterative and dynamic and will develop and adapt in line with improvement priorities.
- 2.4 In January 2023, a new strand was introduced, to improve the lives of children with disabilities.
- 2.5 Key successes to date include:
- Introduction and implementation of the conversations approach to contacts at the Integrated Front Door based on Professor David Thorpe research. Early data reports show improvement in re-referrals reducing, and a reduction of contacts that are converted to referral, meaning that more appropriate work goes to social work for assessment.
  - Attracting Start for Life funding from the DfE for Prevention and Early Help.
  - Development of the Prevention and Early Help strategy.
  - Establishment of the Edge of Care Service (Prevention and Residential).
  - New Children in Care and Care Leavers Service established.
  - Joint Housing Protocol agreed and operational – subject to ongoing review.
  - Voice and influence - Tendering process completed for child participation and 'Mind of My Own' have been awarded the contract.
  - New MA social work course developed for existing Bradford Children's Services staff to increase the number of social workers.
  - Attracting DfE funding for additional Practice Educators to support new social work students.
  - Agreement with local universities to increase the numbers of social work students on BA and MA courses – aiming to increase the number of social workers who want to stay in Bradford.
  - Introducing a new approach to recruiting social work qualified staff from overseas.
- 2.6 The previous improvement plan concluded at the end of March 2022 and the new plan was introduced alongside the refreshed Improvement Board chaired by the Bradford Commissioner.

### **3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

- 3.1 There is currently a very small improvement team (two substantive PO3 officers and one externally provided Improvement Consultant) in place to provide capacity to deliver the improvement plan. The Improvement Consultant is funded by the DfE via the Leeds Relational Practice Centre as part of the Strengthening Families, Protecting Children programme. Funding has been agreed until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023.

The current substantive resource is insufficient to support the whole of the necessary improvements set out in the improvement plan and following the Ofsted ILACS which took place in November and December 2022.

#### **4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL**

- 4.1 The budgetary, workforce, internal and media communications are all high priorities with this improvement plan as this links in with children service moving into a Trust as of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 and as such have their own work stream and monitored separately.

#### **5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES**

- 5.1 The risks relate to not implementing the improvement plan as the majority of the priorities are those which have been identified as being essential to the ongoing improvement requirements for social care, and areas for improvement identified in the recent ILACS, that will enable a move from an Inadequate Ofsted judgement.
- 5.2 By not making the required improvements, and despite the introduction of the new Children and Families Trust and the anticipated benefits that will bring, the risks are that children, young people and their families are not helped and safeguarded as they should be in the Bradford district, and that future Ofsted inspection activities identify and judge the Local Authority to be Inadequate for a third time.
- 5.3 A key risk relates to capacity. There is a large improvement agenda and a very small substantive team (supported by the addition of the temporary DfE funded Improvement Consultant) available to deliver it, now and following the Children and Families Trust commencing in April 2023. There needs to be sufficient improvement team capacity to deliver the Improvement Plan.

#### **6. LEGAL APPRAISAL**

- 6.1 There are no specific legal issues arising from this report but many of the priorities in the plan relate to the local authority's responsibilities to the Children Act 1989.

#### **7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

##### **7.1 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

Not applicable.

##### **7.2 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS**

Not applicable.

##### **7.3 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

Not applicable.

#### **7.4 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT**

No specific issues related to the Act.

#### **7.5 TRADE UNION**

Trade Unions have been and will be consulted on relevant aspects of the plan, for example, the changes to the Integrated Front Door.

#### **7.6 WARD IMPLICATIONS**

There are no specific ward implications.

#### **7.7 IMPLICATIONS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

The whole of the Improvement Plan is concerned with improving outcomes for children and young people including through Corporate Parenting.

#### **7.8 ISSUES ARISING FROM PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESMENT**

No issues identified.

### **8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS**

8.1 None.

### **9. OPTIONS**

9.1 Not applicable.

### **10. RECOMMENDATIONS**

10.1 The Committee is invited to note this report, the new Improvement Plan and the Quarter 3 Progress Report (see appendices).

### **11. APPENDICES**

11.1 Appendix 1 – Improvement Plan.

11.2 Appendix 2 – Quarter 3 Progress Report.

### **12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Not applicable.