



Bradford Children's Services Improvement Plan 2022 – 2024

Improving the lives of children and young people and creating the conditions for success



Introduction and context

In 2018, Bradford's Children's Services were judged to be 'inadequate'. Since then Children's Services, the wider council and partners have been on a journey of improvement. A number of subsequent Ofsted monitoring visits have identified whilst there have been improvements within the service, overall more improvements are necessary. In September 2021, the Secretary of State for Education appointed a Children's Services Commissioner to assess the Council's capacity and capability to improve itself in a reasonable time frame and recommend whether or long term sustainable improvement to children's social care functions could be achieved, whether operational service control should remain within the Council and to advise on alternative delivery and governance arrangements for children's social care functions. The outcome was that Department for Education concluded that Children's Services in Bradford would be provided through a Children's Trust arrangement. The planned go live date is in April 2023.

A refreshed and refocused improvement board has been established and is chaired by the Bradford Commissioner. The board have commissioned a dynamic and iterative improvement plan, the Bradford Children's Services Improvement Plan, to provide a focused approach to making the improvements necessary to improve the lives of children and young people and to establish the conditions for success. There is not a dedicated strand for equality and diversity consideration – this should be considered and addressed throughout the strands, objectives and the success measures.

The inspection of services for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) resulted in a number of areas in which we must improve, and partners have resolved to make these improvements and more. The Bradford Children's Services Improvement Plan should be read alongside the Bradford Local Area SEND Action plan where partners across the District will provide the drive and ownership to improve the areas Ofsted have identified as requiring a Written Statement of Action (WSOA) for driving forward the requirements we need to make.

Foreword

On behalf of the Bradford Children's Services Improvement Board we are delighted to present this improvement plan. This is a great opportunity for Bradford and District to make the crucial changes we need to ensure services for children, young people and their families in Bradford are fit for purpose and subject to continuous improvement so that children and young people are safe, healthy, learning and achieving.

As a board we have committed to making sure that improvements are delivered across all agencies across the district that support and deliver services for families to achieve our aim that all children and young people have the opportunity to reach their potential and enjoy good outcomes.

Our improvement plan is underpinned by restorative, strength-based and family-led approaches which seek to address the impacts of poverty, and promote equality and diversity, and the voice and influence of children, young people, and their families. We will continue to work in partnership at both strategic and operational levels to realise our aims and objectives.



Eileen Milner
Chair of the Children and Families Trust



Marium Haque
Strategic Director Children's Services

Governance and ensuring success

Governance - 'Working with'

Governance of the 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 programme also has strong cross-party support, with clear commitment from all group leaders to support the improvement process.

Bradford Children's Improvement Board

The Bradford Children's Improvement Board is the key partnership body with ownership of the Improvement Plan and responsibility for its delivery. It is made up of strategic representation from partner agencies, working to agreed terms of reference. The Improvement Board is chaired by the Bradford Commissioner.

Bradford Safeguarding Partnership

The Improvement Board will ensure that decisions and activities dovetail with those of the Bradford Safeguarding Partnership which co-ordinates safeguarding across different agencies and promotes the welfare of children in Bradford

Monitoring Performance and Quality – how much we do and how we do it

Using data and intelligence to monitor and improve performance and quality of practice will be key to the success of our improvement journey, and is a vital part of new ways of working across the council in the future. Progress against the Improvement Plan will be reported to the Children's Improvement Board. Reporting will include but not be limited to:

- A performance report including progress against key indicators linked to the Improvement Plan
- Discrete scorecards linked to the various strands

Making a difference to children, young people and families

Our approach is firmly focused on improving outcomes for children, young people and families. In addition to data and intelligence which shows how we are performing against key indicators, we are using Outcome Based Accountability to demonstrate the difference our improvements make to the lives of children and their families. Our updates to the Improvement Board, will show through case studies and feedback from children, their families and partners the positive impact of changes.

Glossary of terms

Below is a list which provides short explanations of acronyms and professional terms in this plan.

- Integrated Front Door (IFD) is a team of professionals including Children's Services social workers, police, early help, health and education which responds to initial enquiries regarding children and young people in Bradford.
- Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) - a programme that gives newly qualified social workers extra support during their first year of employment. The programme aims to help them develop their skills, knowledge and professional confidence. The ASYE programme for social workers who work with children and families is based on the statement of knowledge and skills for child and family social work.
- Corporate Parenting Panel - co-ordinates and oversees the work undertaken with children in care in Bradford to make sure that they are in appropriate placements and receive the same opportunities as their peers.
- LCS (Liquid Logic Children's Services) Children's Social Care System has been specifically developed by and for practitioners to allow case management and record keeping for children in need, looked after children, adoption and child protection cases, as quickly and simply as possible.

About our Improvement Plan

In two halves, the plan 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.

A - Improving the lives of children and young people

B - Creating the conditions for success

A - Improving the lives of children and young people:

1. Who are referred to our Front Door
2. Who need early help
3. Who are in need of help and protection
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)

1 - Improving the lives of children and young people - who are referred to our Integrated Front Door

The 'Front Door' for social work services plays a crucial role in the safeguarding system in Bradford – as the place where local people and services can access robust and well-informed advice, support and decision-making from social work professionals. Getting this right is vital for ensuring that every child gets the right support and protection at the right time, and getting this wrong can lead to both delayed help for children and unsustainable pressures for local agencies and the social work service, leading to a cycle of growing pressure and weakening practice. An effective Front Door benefits from key partners working closely and collaboratively together to achieve improved outcomes.

In Bradford, too many contacts are being made to the front door that do not require a social work response and the proportion that result in No Further Action (NFA) is too high. This places an unnecessary burden on the front door and means many families are not helped early enough and face avoidable contact, referral, and social work assessment.

What we are aiming for:

- Greater collective ownership, consistency and accountability of the Front Door; strengthening and embedding partnership working, processes and governance.
- An environment that encourages a culture of challenge across the partnership, where appropriate, and healthy dialogue is welcomed.
- Response to risk is appropriate and consistent at all times.
- Partner agencies consistently make appropriate contacts.
- Rebalance of the proportion of referrals and assessments leading to no further action.
- Children and young people safeguarded out of hours by children's specialist emergency duty team (EDT).
- Joint, shared decisions about the right service, right time for children and families.

How we will do this:

- Introducing and embedding an approach based for the IFD based on conversation-based contacts and referrals – based on Professor David Thorpe research.
- As part of new approach, establishing a weekly partnership review of decision-making.
- Establishing a dedicated Emergency Duty Team (EDT) for children and young people.

How we will know we are succeeding:

- Families receive the right support and the right time.
- Partners are confident in shared decision-making.
- Children's EDT is operational.
- We will monitor the number and outcomes of contacts and referrals on a quarterly basis.

2 - Improving the lives of children and young people - who need early help

Early Help for children and families is more effective and less expensive than intervening when problems become entrenched. Families should be enabled and supported to have the right conversations, with the right people and at the right time about their needs or concerns, so that statutory interventions can be avoided where this is appropriate. Intervening as early as possible, regardless of the age of the child or young person, can positively improve their outcomes. Being helped earlier is better for children and families and also ensures that the local safeguarding system is sustainable. In Bradford, historic disinvestment in early help and prevention has resulted in children, young people and their families not being helped early enough and as such there is a need for an improved offer across the district.

What we are aiming for:

- Families being helped by those that know them best, as early as possible in the life of the problem, in the communities in which they live, and for access to help made simpler
- A rebalancing and strengthening of the safeguarding system through developing better Early Help and preventative services
- A reduction of the pressures on statutory social work services through improved early help and community support
- An effective partnership approach to early help across the district based on shared: ownership, understanding, principles and values

How we will do this:

- Implementing the Start for Life the programme across the district and enhancing support to children in their first 1,001 days.
- Making early help 'Simpler, Nearer and Earlier' – by further developing our Family Hubs arrangements and ensuring they are well known, welcoming and accessible; and building area based Family Hubs networks involving family members and Third Sector and Education partners.
- Implementing robust arrangements for evaluation and co-production and expanding work with peer supporters and volunteers building on supporting the District to be a safe, green and active place to live, work and play.
- Harnessing opportunities from the City of Culture to create an inclusive, creative environment for babies, children and young people which celebrates the vibrant diversity of our district.

How we will know we are succeeding:

- Feedback from families about if they feel they have been helped
- Number of multi-agency early help assessments (tier 2 and tier 3).
- % of repeat referrals to the Front Door
- % of early help audits carried out where the outcome is 'Good or Outstanding Practice'
- Number of multi-agency practitioners trained in early help related workforce opportunities who become lead practitioners
- Proportion of local partners reporting high levels of confidence and satisfaction with locality early help services
- We will monitor data on a quarterly basis

3a - Improving the lives of children and young people - who are in need of help and protection

For those children and young people whose needs cannot be met by universal or early help approaches, they may become subject to child in need or child protection plans depending on the presenting issues and circumstances. Children and young people should be protected through effective multi-agency arrangements with key participants attending multi-agency meetings (for example, child in need meetings, strategy meetings, core groups, initial or review child protection conferences, child exploitation risk management meetings). These meetings need to be effective forums for timely information-sharing, planning, decision-making and monitoring and actions should happen within agreed timescales and the help and protection provided reduce risk and meet need.

Bradford is continuing to improve despite the challenges faced by the national shortage of qualified social workers and an over-reliance on agency workers. This instability of workforce continues to impact on the quality of practice and is highlighted in a number of Ofsted Monitoring visit letters. There is also much work to do to improve multi-agency relationships at all levels to ensure that the needs of vulnerable children and young people are met:

‘The need for improved partnership working is recognised by the senior leaders of all agencies and partners are committed to working together to improve relationships, services and outcomes for children and families in Bradford (Commissioners Report 2022).

What we are aiming for:

- Partnership approach to compliance for strategy discussions in line with national good practice guidelines.
- Social work teams focusing on the right children, at the right support at the right time.
- Timeliness and quality of all Child in Need and Child Protection statutory processes.
- Increased attendance for children and young people in their education settings.

How we will do this:

- Partnership commitment to ensure resources are deployed in a timely manner to enable strategy meetings take place in time with full statutory attendance.
- Using a focused improvement approach to improving key areas of safeguarding practice.
- District wide approach to improving educational attendance including those not on a school roll.
- Promoting the identification of Privately Fostered children and notifications made to the Local Authority.

How we will know we are succeeding:

- Review and audit show strong and improving decision-making practice.
- Compliance data on strategy discussions – timeliness and attendance.
- Attendance data of key partners at ICPCs and RCPCs.
- Educational attendance data
- Proportion of initial Child Protection Conferences within 15 working days
- All relevant agencies have processes in place to support identification of Privately Fostered children

3b - Improving the lives of children and young people with disabilities

This strand was initiated in January 2023 and is in development

For those children and young people with disabilities.....

Text needed – sets out the background to this strand, and explains why children with disabilities need the help they need and where, how and why we need to improve

What we are aiming for:

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How we will do this:

- Streamlined pathway, eligibility criteria in line with good and outstanding authorities, smooth but robust assessment process and multi-disciplinary Team to deliver support to families with children whom have a disability and/or complex needs.
- Improved access and understanding to accurate information and advice for families.
- Increase the sufficiency for children with complex needs.
- Skilled workforce to deliver a good and outstanding service to families and children with a disability and/or complex needs.
- Communications, engagement and co-produced outputs with families and children with a disability and/or complex needs.

How we will know we are succeeding:

- Success measure to be identified in February 2023

4 - Improving the lives of children and young people - who are on the edge of care – including a Turning the Curve plan

Many children and young people are considered to be on the 'Edge of Care' in that they are at risk of becoming looked after. There are many reasons for this including parental capacity and parent's needs and / or the child's needs including non-engagement with education or anti-social behaviour, and may include that the child has been subject to a child in need or a child protection plan. Without the right support to the child and the family, the situation may worsen and the outcome may be that the child becomes looked after. Edge of care interventions are essential in supporting children to be able to remain with their families. In addition, in Bradford, there are too many children in care and this can often result in them experiencing poorer outcomes than their peers, and there is considerable expenditure on external placements. A turning the curve plan for the district will aim to: reduce the number of children who need to become looked after; where it is in the best interests of children, carry out targeted work with the family so children can go home; and reduce expenditure on costly external placements.

What we are aiming for:

- Improve long term outcomes for children and young people
- Effective support to families so that children are able to live with their families
- Safe reduction in the numbers of children who need to be looked after
- Reduction in expenditure on external placements

How we will do this:

- Development of an Edge of Care service to safely support children to avoid coming into care and for children to go home where it is safe to do so – a new model and approach.
- Introduction of evidence based approaches to support children to return home (reunification).
- Identification of actions from a Turning the Curve Event focusing on the factors why large % of children have statutory interventions such as being in care.
- TtC - Collaboration with Born in Bradford to research and analyse key issues why Bradford children need statutory interventions such as being in care
- TtC - Agreeing and trialling / piloting new approaches that bridge Early Help and Social Work
- TtC - Reviewing existing approaches and services to safely reduce the number of children in care that work and expand as per findings
- TtC – Develop and implement evidence based approach to reunification
- Identification of those children whose care orders can be discharged, e.g. those who are placed with parents, those who can live under Special Guardianship with family and friends and whose adoption orders can be more swiftly progressed.
- Enhancement of family decision making approaches (e.g. Family Group Conference) to identify and harness the utility of the child's whole family and network so that care can be avoided.
- Establishment of a Placements Review Panel to ensure placements are meeting the children's needs whilst ensuring best value for money.

How we will know we are succeeding:

- Number and RPTT of children in care and number and RPTT new entrants to care.
- Number of those who have left care due to adoption and Special Guardianship Orders.
- Number of children who have benefitted from evidence based approach and have avoided care or have gone home.
- Number of children and young people in external residential placements.
- Outreach edge of care service - % who did not enter care after being supported.
- Residential edge of care service - % who did not enter care after being supported.

5 - Improving the lives of children and young people in care and who have left care

As 'Corporate Parents' we need to make sure that children and young people who are looked after and who have left care benefit from the highest quality support possible to ensure they have healthy, happy, purposeful lives and achieve their full potential. Most young people are supported by their parents well into their twenties, so we need to consider how together as a partnership we can provide the same or better support for Care Leavers who face more challenges than many young people in their transition to adulthood. In addition, we need to make sure there is better help in place for those who need extra support with their mental health, and to support all care leavers into learning and work and housing that meet their needs.

What we are aiming for:

- Corporate Parenting Strategy governed by an effective Corporate Parenting Panel aiming for the highest standards of care, support and outcomes for children in care and care leavers
- The right type of placements and housing, in the right places to meet the needs of children and young people in care and care leavers
- Improved outcomes for children in care and care leavers through a dedicated single service
- Bradford district recognises and celebrates the achievements of children in care and care leavers
- Smooth transition to adult services where they are required
- Wellbeing and mental health needs are recognised and support to access services is improved
- All Care Leavers (except those with exceptional circumstances) are in learning or work, or have a clear, well-resourced plan to help them into learning or employment
- Life stories can 'travel' with children and young people and can be accessed digitally

How we will do this:

- Corporate Parenting Strategy, setting strategic direction for Children in Care and Care Leavers
- Corporate Parenting Panel provides robust governance for the Corporate Parenting Strategy
- Agreement and implementation of Sufficiency Strategy ensuring the right type of placements available locally at the right time for the right children and young people
- Establishing dedicated Children in Care and Care Leaver service
- Ensuring transition work to adult services for those who need them is timely and managed jointly by adults and children's services
- Putting the Joint Housing Protocol for care leavers into operation
- District approach to increasing work related opportunities for Care Leavers to ensure they are engaged in meaningful work in their community and are in education, employment or training
- Improving access to mental health support
- Digital approach to Life Story work is established and operational
- Children in care and care leavers' achievements are celebrated by the district

How we will know we are succeeding:

- Data: on % placement stability, % Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQs) where scores indicate need; % care leavers in suitable accommodation; % care leavers who are in Education, employment and training; and % Children in care and care leavers who have a digital life story.
- Corporate Parenting Panel includes elected members, and key partners.
- Children in Care and Care Leavers service is established.
- % Transition plans at age 17.
- Housing protocol is agreed, approved and operational.
- Number of employment experience opportunities by agency and employer.
- Establishment of celebration events; feedback from children and young people.

6 - Improving the lives of children and young people – by ensuring they have voice and influence

Children and young people have a right to be involved in decisions that affect their lives. Having a voice and influence means they feel that their voices are listened to, valued and can influence decisions and actions. The term 'voice and influence' encompasses consultation, feedback, participation, empowerment; and active engagement. There is strong evidence that working with children and young people wherever possible, instead of doing things to them or for them produces better outcomes and helps to build confidence and resilience. Giving voice and influence to children and young people in decision making demonstrates our commitment to them and acknowledges their right to shape their own future. It increases trust and can enable positive change even in complex situations. Agencies need to feel confident that decisions are informed by what children and young people say they want and need, which should lead to better quality services, saving money and using resources more effectively. In this improvement plan, Bradford Children's Services are focusing primarily on voice and influence for children in care and for care leavers. Future developments would include all children open to social care and working with parents.

What we are aiming for:

- Children in care and care leavers are routinely able to have voice and influence using a variety of approaches
- Care leavers routinely have access to exit interviews to understand their experience
- Learning from voice and influence activity is triangulated, analysed, shared, and changes made are communicated back to children and young people and staff

How we will do this:

- Strengthening and consolidating the three established voice and influence forums – younger children in care, older children in care and care leavers
- Establishing a consistent approach to exit interviews with those who are leaving care
- Introducing a digital mechanism for providing information, seeking feedback and providing a feedback loop to all children in care and care leavers
- Analysing a range of sources of feedback from children in care and care leavers to inform service development and improvement
- Identification of opportunities to collaborate with the work for Bradford to become a Child Friendly City
- Developing quarterly report on triangulated feedback from a range of sources to provide thematic findings and recommendations for improvement and service development

How we will know we are succeeding:

- Number of children and young people participating in each of the three groups (younger children in care (CiC), older children CiC and care leavers)
- Number of children and young people attending Corporate Parenting Panel
- Establishment of digital mechanism and number of children and young people being informed, consulted and providing feedback
- Number and proportion of Exit Interviews carried out with care leavers
- Number of children and young people taking part in Chat Back sessions
- Number of children and young people involved in recruitment interviews
- Quarterly report is implemented

7 – Strategic leadership ensuring the conditions for success are created

Research and inspection in Children's Services has shown the importance and impact of high quality leadership. Ofsted (2016) highlight the key role of leadership in driving change and improvement 'Ofsted has seen effective leadership transform the quality of work with children: leaders with a firm grip on practice at every level, who make sure vulnerable children don't have to wait for help and that frontline professionals have enough time to work with every family on their caseload'.

Strategic partnership leaders across the district need to focus on 'creating the conditions for success' – ensuring there is a strong culture of child focus, line of sight on practice, learning and improvement, clear direction and support for staff with strong visibility and access, and the right partnerships and resources in place to support services.

Bradford has had too many changes in leadership and Ofsted continue to focus on this. The approach to leadership used in authorities like Leeds, West Berkshire and Stockport – a focus on relationships and whole system change - has been shown to have a big impact leading to rapid improvement. This approach will be adopted in Bradford leading up to and beyond the introduction of the new children's trust arrangements.

What we are aiming for:

- Improved outcomes for children, young people and families in line with the Children and Young People's Strategic Plan priorities
- Working *with* families to enable positive change and approach to co-production
- Workforce who feel supported
- Stability, visibility and accessibility of leadership
- Positive external validation from Ofsted
- Effective line of sight on practice with children, young people and families across agencies
- Delivering financial sustainability

How we will do this:

- Establishing the Children and Families Trust, and senior leadership team
- Training and development programme for Elected Members to bolster strategic support and challenge role incorporating Corporate Parenting (Total Respect)
- Developing an improvement team to ensure inspection readiness and relentless focus on improvement
- Developing a district wide and multi-agency approach to co-production voice and influence for children, young people and parent carers
- Maximising staff engagement through a range of approaches including: continue programme of staff briefings and consultation; Staff Reference Group and Pulse surveys
- Agreeing and implementing a financial sustainability strategy

How we will know we are succeeding:

- External validation from Ofsted (Monitoring Visits, JTAI, Focused Visits, Annual Conversation)
- Feedback from staff e.g. through staff briefings and consultation, Staff Reference group, Pulse Surveys, and Social Work Health Check Survey
- Feedback from children, young people and families
- Vital Signs reports
- Financial Reports
- Improvement plan strands progress and achieve objectives in timescales

8 – A sufficient and stable workforce

When working to improve outcomes for all children and young people, success depends in large part on the capacity and quality of those people who plan, manage and deliver social care services at the front line. We need a skilled and more stable workforce, in sufficient numbers, led and deployed effectively around the needs of children and young people in Bradford. Currently there is an over-reliance on the use of agency workers and a number of vacancies. This leads to instability of service, inconsistency of support to children and their families and an unsustainable budgetary pressure.

What we are aiming for:

- A clear understanding of what a sufficient workforce looks like
- A stable workforce which provides good quality, consistent care to children, young people and their families
- Reduced overspend on agency so that budgets come back in line with plans
- Bradford to become a 'destination employer' for social workers at all levels
- Clear career pathways linked to succession plans that mitigate the risk of under resource and skills gaps

How we will do this:

- Completing a modelling exercise to understand the optimum structure required to meet demand whilst maintaining a healthy case load; and implement optimum service structure and maintain budget stability
- Increasing the proportion of permanent staff by:
 - An ongoing high quality recruitment campaign that builds on the Bring Heart brand
 - Targeting agency staff to move to permanent recruitment
 - Implement overseas recruitment
 - Attract more newly qualified social workers (NQSW) from out of the district to take their Assessed and Supported Year of Employment (ASYE) in Bradford
 - Develop proposals to improve staff engagement and retention
 - Partnership with local universities to provide additional social work student places for Bradford

How we will know we are succeeding:

- Increase in number of permanent staff and reduction in turnover
- Decrease in the number of agency staff
- Evidence of strong staff engagement
- Impact on budgetary pressures
- Positive external validation e.g. Ofsted

9 - A constant focus on practice improvement and an agreed practice model

The quality of front line practice is key to improving the lives of children and families in Bradford district. It is the way that our staff work with children, young people and families that will, in the end, make the difference and build the relationships, skills and confidence to make change. Effective practice needs shared values, a good theoretical practice model, good skills and knowledge from staff and the right training, support and supervision from managers. We are implementing our Restorative Based Practice Model which focuses on empowering our children, young people and families to find solutions to their problems, and recognises them as experts of their own lives.

What we are aiming for:

- Shared values and restorative based model of practice in place across Bradford Children's Services.
- Shared understanding of good practice across the district.
- Highlighted and shared good or outstanding practice.
- High quality, comprehensive, and responsive Continuous Professional Development offer to social work staff with voice of young people
- Social work students better prepared for post qualification
- Systematic approach to ensuring workforce development opportunities offered and taken up as a learning outcome for audit and external validation

How we will do this:

- Implementing Restorative Practice training and development programme and capacity to embed restorative practices such as maximising family decision making opportunities; restorative approach to complaints; restorative leadership sets. Working with neighbouring local authorities to support implementation.
- Increased multi-agency and multi-disciplinary joint workforce development opportunities
- Carrying out Appreciative Enquiries through the Safeguarding Partnership.
- Developing additional ASYE Academy Faculties for specific social care roles.
- Continued focus on intelligence to design required workforce development programmes
- Increased presence of social work specialists on social work courses and young people in workforce development opportunities
- Implementing an approach to ensuring workforce development opportunities taken up where required and identified

How we will know we are succeeding:

- Proportion of (a) Bradford staff and (b) partner staff trained in Restorative Based Practice Model.
- Proportion of those who have received training who report high quality and impact of training on improved practice.
- Audit shows increasing quality of practice.
- Analysis of workforce development opportunities offered, taken up and followed up when not attended.
- Number of young people involved in workforce development opportunities.
- Number of Appreciative Enquiries carried out.

10. A strong and collaborative partnership

Success and change in Children's Services relies on strong and effective partnership working – children, young people and families need joined up working between all local services and these services need to be shaped and funded collectively if they are to succeed. Many of the issues raised by Ofsted and the problems identified in Bradford have related to the effectiveness of partnership working in recent years. There is a strong commitment by partners and a key aim of the Improvement Plan must be to make best use of this to improve outcomes for children and young people and their families. Quotes from the Bradford Commissioner's Report, 2021

'Whilst there is evidence that the Bradford Safeguarding Partnership is working well, overall partnership working in Bradford is not strong. There is no clear vision for children that is shared and owned by agencies working with children and young people in Bradford.'

'Relationships between the local authority and some partners have been strained. There is a desire and commitment to reset these relationships and this needs to be a priority going forward.'

What we are aiming for:

- Robust Improvement Plan and high functioning Improvement Board with a relentless focus on improving outcomes for children and young people across the Bradford District
- Governance arrangement to lead development and implementation of high quality, refreshed Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) and programme ensuring district wide focus and effort on improving outcomes for children and young people.
- Good progress for strengthening the role of Bradford Children's Safeguarding Partnership and district wide response to National Panel Recommendations.
- Collective investment across services in shared priorities, commissioning and plans.
- Collective efforts across Bradford towards realising a Child Friendly City.
- Collective connection to the children and young people's voice and experience

How we will do this:

- Establishing Bradford Children's Improvement Board and develop a quality Improvement Plan.
- Holding a series of Turning the Curve events through the Improvement Board to identify shared actions to make improvements in key areas of work with children and young people.
- Holding conversations to explore the establishment of a Children's Partnership.
- Developing a refreshed Children and Young People's Plan and identify who will implement it.
- Working jointly with the Safeguarding Children's Partnership to review and refresh if appropriate the BDSCP Business Plan, ensuring correlation with the Improvement Plan and the CYPP.
- Addressing the local recommendations from the National Panel review report into the death of Star Hobson and Arthur Labinjo-Hughes.
- Utilising Strategic Joint Commissioning and refreshing approach to funding for high cost placements, children and young people with Continuing Health Care Needs and CAMHs.
- Identify opportunities to Child Friendly City – business and community partnership
- Ensuring that the work of the board is informed by the voice and experience of children and young people in line with the terms of reference agreed by the Improvement Board.

How we will know we are succeeding:

- Partners report improved satisfaction and confidence in partnership arrangements and joint working.
- Partners report improved confidence and knowledge of key local safeguarding policies and services including 'thresholds' and local hubs.
- Audit and data show improvements to practice in key areas of joint working including CP processes, and domestic violence.
- Feedback from children, young people and families.

11 – Buildings, IT, HR, Finance, Business Support and equipment that support quality practice

The physical and support function aspects of the conditions for success are critical in ensuring that services working directly with children, young people and their families can focus the majority of their efforts on improving lives and outcomes. These aspects include the places where people work and the IT kit they use that help remove barriers and support high quality practice. Equally, enabling Human Resources (HR), Finance, Information Governance (IG), Commissioning, and Business Support services play an essential role in improving services, lives and outcomes – and improving the daily worked lives of frontline managers and their teams.

What we are aiming for:

- Greater integration of services where possibilities exist
- High quality office accommodation in locations that promote multi-agency and multi-disciplinary working and are family friendly
- Social work teams feel they have the conditions in place to do a good job including HR, IG, Commissioning, Finance and Business Support
- IT and digital solutions that reduce bureaucracy and time spent in front of computers and allow more time spent with families
- Staff wellbeing is promoted

How we will do this:

- Agreeing and implementing refreshed and tailored support arrangements for HR, IT, Finance, Business Support, IG, and Commissioning for Children's Services.
- Implementing a workforce development approach for managers for HR, IT, Finance, Information Governance etc.
- Identifying opportunities for co-location of multi-agency services for families e.g. early help with social work and other partners where possible.
- Ensuring that Children's social care office bases are child and family friendly and in locations that promote multi-disciplinary working; longer term plan for co-location around family hubs and schools.
- Securing suitable Business Support capacity to ensure key processes are met, particularly those that are statutory.
- Engaging staff in reviewing and reducing bureaucratic burdens that get in the way of social work with families.
- Promoting staff wellbeing and emotional support, drawing on the offer available through the council, for example, Mindfulness training, staff networks and using regular bulletins for updated information; and encouraging engagement with regular Pulse Surveys for additional insight.

How we will know we are succeeding:

- Staff satisfaction survey
- Feedback from managers on time spent on HR, IG and finance activities
- Number of co-located services
- Impact on statutory timescales
- Number of staff engaged in wellbeing offers
- Reduction in time spent on recruitment and other HR activities by social work managers

12 – Insight - learning and improving through performance management and quality assurance

When providing services to children, young people and their families, and focusing on how to improve, we need to be able to ask ourselves some key questions:

- What did we do?
- How much did we do and did we do it in the right timeframe?
- How well did we do it?
- Did we do the things we should be doing or set out to do to achieve overall outcomes for children, young people and families?
- Is anyone any better off?

To be able to answer these questions, our performance management (PM) and quality assurance (QA) arrangements need to be robust and allow us to move from data to insight. There are strong arrangements in Bradford but we are continuously improving what we do.

What we are aiming for:

- Using insight from PM and QA for greater focus on essential improvement activities that promote improved outcomes
- Strengthened PM and QA arrangements
- Strengthened leadership role, understanding, engagement and expertise in QA, improvement and learning
- Identification of opportunities for further collaboration and partnerships across the district for insight and learning
- Improved data sharing at the Improvement Board

How we will do this:

- Embedding a dispersed leadership approach to performance management and quality assurance, with local areas collaboratively reviewing performance with staff, and performance management/ quality assurance reflected in individual service plans.
- Ensuring the quality of audits through consistent follow up on recommendations and sharing learning in teams.
- Developing a Performance Framework including review of existing suite of performance reports.
- Developing a Quality Assurance report which analyses all QA activity (audits, external validation, inspection, feedback from children and families etc.) and identifies areas and actions for improvement
- Reviewing and developing the QA role of IRO and CP service
- Reviewing and developing the QA role of the Safeguarding Partnership
- Developing partnerships with Born in Bradford and Data Accelerator – initial projects to support Turning the Curve (see strand 4 - Edge of Care)
- Agreeing development programme for middle managers and Team Managers to strengthen their role, understanding, engagement and expertise in PM, QA, improvement, and learning
- Identifying and sharing partner data sets at the Improvement Board

How we will know we are succeeding:

- New PM and QA framework is implemented
- Quality Assurance report is implemented
- Partners share relevant data reports at the Improvement Board
- % of audits recommendations are followed up

Improvement Plan on a Page – Key Priority Milestones – *subject to further population as work streams progress*

Improving the lives of children and young people

Strand of the plan	Nov 22	Dec 22	Jan 23	Feb 23	Mar 23	Apr 23	May 23	Jun 23	Jul 23	Aug 23	Sept 23	Oct 23
1 – Front door	Phase 1 + launch of practitioner line	Weekly referral review meeting	Phase 2 + Launch of public line; DT review		Discrete CYP EDT; DT review			DT review			DT review	
2 – Early Help	Start for Life programme leads in post; Co-production workshop	Simpler, Nearer, Earlier (SNE) & Family Help (FH) Theories of Change;	Early Help Strategy published; SNE Plan; Start for life (SfL) delivery plan; FH impl. plan	New processes for simpler access to early help; Impl. SNE; SfL delivery begins	SfL + FH delivery plans will inform future key milestones							
3 – Help & Protection		Private fostering plan										
4 – Edge of Care & Turning the Curve to safely reduce no.s of children in care	All IT equipment upgraded; DfE Funding decision on new home purchases	Increase in SGO and adoption; Born in Bradford collaboration	Children's Homes Procedures Manual update; Induction & training programme		Homes Regulatory Compliance review	Statements of Purpose & Function Review; Refurbishment of the Willows and purchase off The Birches	Staffing structure for the Birches and Ofsted registration				Homes Regulatory Compliance review	Statements of Purpose & Function Review
5 – Children in Care & Care Leavers	Joint Housing Protocol	Children in care + Care Leavers service		Corporate Parenting Strategy	Plan for celebration events						Digital life stories implemented	

Creating the conditions for success

Strand of the plan	Nov 22	Dec 22	Jan 23	Feb 23	Mar 23	Apr 23	May 23	Jun 23	Jul 23	Aug 23	Sept 23	Oct 23
6 – Voice & Influence	Corporate Parenting training; Young voice forum is operational	Checkpoint review of Exit Interviews for care leavers	Quarterly report initiated									
7 – Strategic Leadership												
8 – Workforce	Optimum structure & budget agreed; On-boarding starts of international recruits	New DfE funded Practice Educators commence	40 international recruits started; 15 NQSW in ASYE	New Bradford sponsored MA SW course commences	2 nd Staff retention payment							
9 – Practice Improvement & Practice Model												
10 – Partnership												
11 – Buildings, IT, HR, Finance etc.	Business Support capacity review completed	Identifying opportunities for area teams & co-location	Agreeing & implementing refreshed & tailored support arrangements for staff as they move into the Trust		Remaining area teams to move into their perspective localities							
12 – Data & Insight												

Summary of Ofsted areas for improvement – ILACS Report Published 31st January 2023

#	Area for Improvement – to be aligned to existing strand of the plan following consultation	Suggested Strand
1	Council and corporate senior leaders should ensure that they fully and effectively discharge their role as corporate parents, and ensure that children’s social care is provided with the resources and support required in a timely way to expedite sustainable improvements.	7 – Strategic leadership ensuring the conditions for success
2	The sufficiency and stability of the workforce, including senior leaders and managers.	8 – A sufficient and stable workforce
3	The quality and timeliness of assessments of risk and need in all their forms, including the response to domestic violence.	3 – Improving the lives of children and young people who are in need of help and protection
4	The timely completion of statutory safeguarding checks and compliance with regulation regarding private fostering and connected carers.	3 – Improving the lives of children and young people who are in need of help and protection
5	The timeliness and quality of decisions in respect of section 47 enquiries.	3 – Improving the lives of children and young people who are in need of help and protection
6	The currency and accuracy of children’s records.	9 – A constant focus on practice improvement and an agreed practice model
7	The effectiveness of all multi-agency meetings and their influence in driving children’s plans.	3 – Improving the lives of children and young people who are in need of help and protection
8	The timely escalation to public law outline (PLO) and timely progression of permanence in all its forms.	4 – Improving the lives of children and young people who are on the edge of care – including a Turning the Curve plan
9	The effectiveness and impact of independent reviewing officers (IROs).	5 – Improving the lives of children and young people in care and who have left care
10	Foster carer morale, training, recruitment and retention, including the support offered to special guardians.	5 – Improving the lives of children and young people in care and who have left care
11	The quality and safety of in-house residential provision, including safer recruitment.	5 – Improving the lives of children and young people in care and who have left care
12	The offer of safe, appropriate and sustainable homes for care leavers and their preparation for leaving care.	5 – Improving the lives of children and young people in care and who have left care
13	Clarity regarding the process of completing personal education plans (PEPs) so that they are consistently completed by all relevant professionals.	5 – Improving the lives of children and young people in care and who have left care
14	The quality and effectiveness of supervision to staff at all levels by managers and leaders.	9 – A constant focus on practice improvement and an agreed practice model