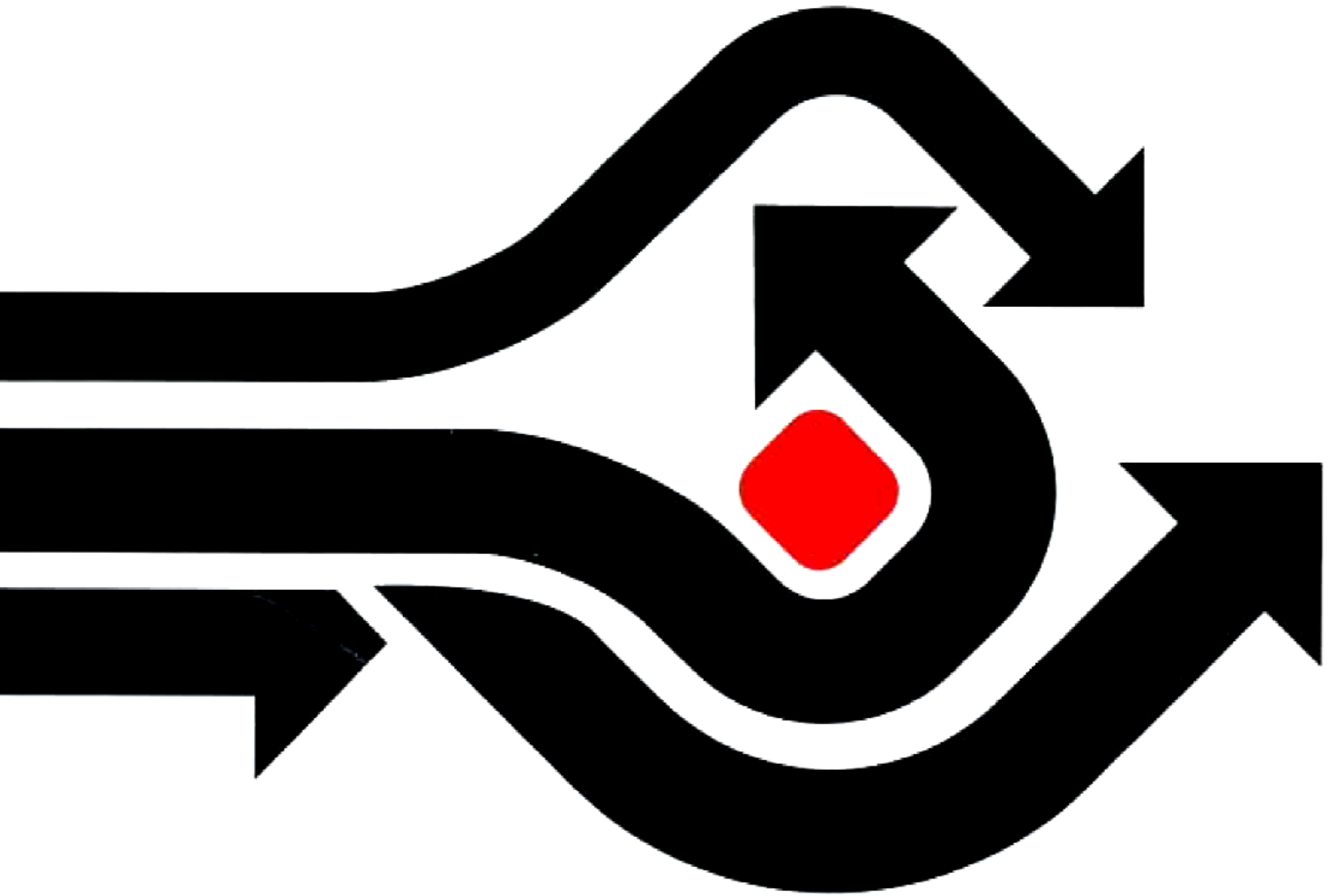


MAKING IT HAPPEN - 15 DAYS MESSAGE



# The Roadmap to Excellence



THE LONDON BOROUGH

# Towards Excellence - Delivering better outcomes for children and families

## “Getting to the Heart of Practice”

### Developing a clear direction for Children’s Social Care

I have taken up this role at a crucial time in Bromley Children Services. There is an urgent need to deliver swift improvement of our services for children and families. The children’s social care department needs good quality management support and clear direction to enable it to deliver good services to our most vulnerable children. It needs a clear vision supported by joined up strategic arrangements, and a roadmap that sets out how we will move our practice and work with families towards excellence.

At the start of our journey together, I set myself many challenges, which included the following:

- To meet the senior management team and leaders to understand the context, challenges and opportunities in Bromley;
- To meet and listen to frontline staff to hear their experiences, and their ideas for how we can improve the service;
- To review the service structure to identify what already works well and what needs to be improved;
- To meet our agency partners to strengthen our inter agency relationships;
- To introduce a culture of leadership that is based on the notion of a collective ‘we’ rather than the singular ‘I’.

Well, my first 15 days are up and I spent much of those 15 days listening to staff and assessing our strengths, weaknesses and opportunities. With your help and support I have been able to develop a good sense of where we are now and what some of our challenges are. In this document, I will share with you my views and priorities for the children’s social care department. I will also give you a sense of the direction of travel we, as a department, needs to take to provide excellence to children and their families in Bromley.



## Our public service ethos

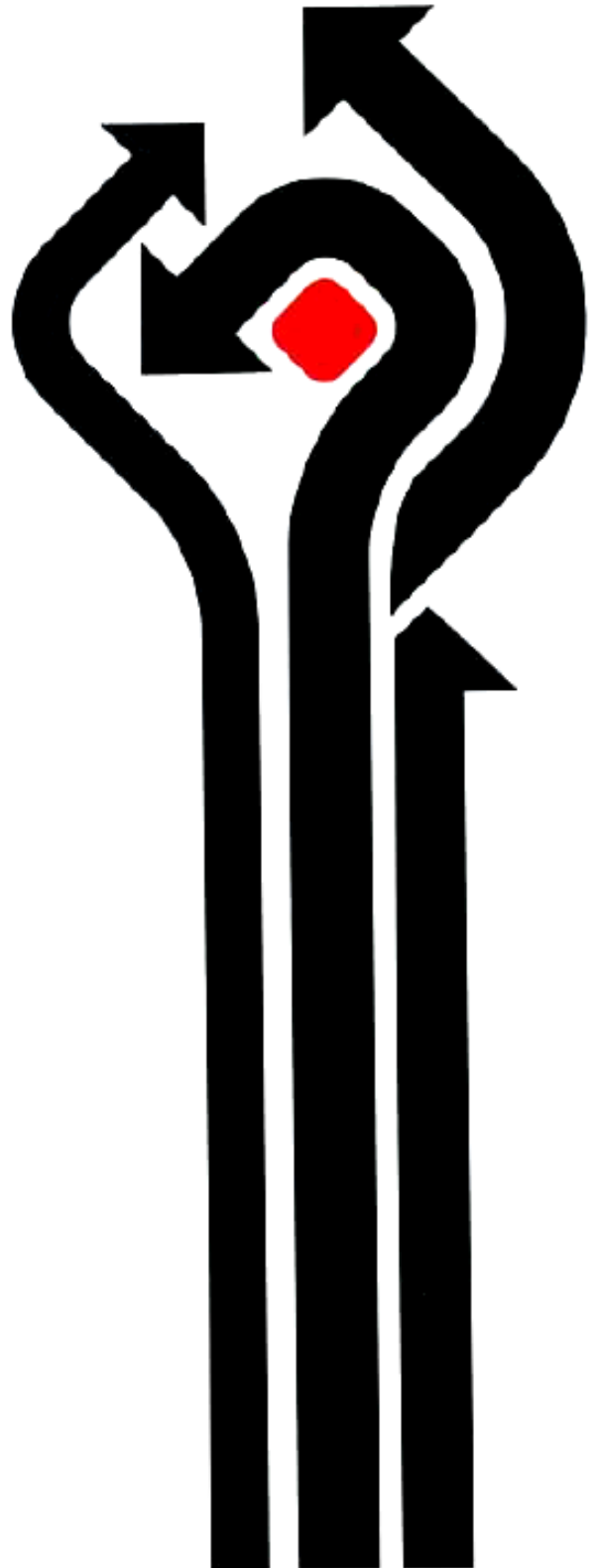
Colleagues, I want you to take a moment to think about why you come to work every day. What is it that motivates you? When I come to work every day, I want to improve the lives of our children and their families, because this is fundamental to my core belief and underpins my motivation for being here.

At a time of deep financial cuts in local government, this core belief becomes even more important. I, like you, want our children to achieve their ambitions; to be safe; to have a decent home where they are well cared for; to thrive socially and emotionally; to achieve academically, and to transition successfully into adulthood in order to be productive members of the community. So, I come to work every day to try and make sense of the challenges facing our children and their families and to provide good quality public services to meet their needs.

## Is what we do good enough?

Since our Ofsted's inspection in May 2016 we know that the service has not been good enough. It fell well below our ambitions for our children and we know that we have to put this right.

I will make no secret of the fact that I am very ambitious for our department and our children, and it is important to me that you are too. I want us to believe that we can be the best and that we can achieve the best outcomes in the country for our service users. Anything less than "good" falls below the expectations that I have for this Department, and for Bromley children and we will strive to raise the standard until we are consistently good or better. It is important to know that with the right support, leadership and guidance this is achievable in Bromley, and we will see this achieved if we pull together to make it happen.



## Vision and Values

The first milestone in our journey to good is agreeing and adopting a shared vision and common set of values. As the starting point, I would like to set out and share with you my vision and values for our department:

“By working together with agency partners, we will ensure that every child in Bromley has the right help at the right time to keep them safe, and to meet their needs, so that they achieve, thrive and reach their full potential.”

Our core values and principles as services are as follows:

- Children’s safety and their wellbeing are our priority.
- Listening to children, understanding their experiences and building effective working relationships with children and their carers is at the heart of all our work. Purposeful direct work and time with children and their families is key to achieving good outcomes.
- We will treat families and children with respect always.
- Early help and good quality intervention in a child’s life when problems first appear is vital to prevent problems getting worse and a key part of our approach.
- Partnership work with other agencies is essential to providing the right specialist and holistic help and support that families need. We can only support children effectively if we do so holistically with the multi-agency partnership.
- We will intervene with children and families at the right time, and develop a thorough understanding of the needs and the risks to each individual child, and their lived experience, views and wishes. We will set out clear, easily understood, SMART plans with agencies in partnership with parents and carers to address them. Where these are not successful we will take timely, appropriate and robust action within a timescale that is right for the child.
- We will strive to ensure that every child who is unable to live with their birth family will, with the minimum of delay, live in a stable permanent family or care setting that meets his or her needs into adulthood.
- We will ensure that children looked after or leaving care in Bromley will have close attentive support that meets their needs, and that we will be as ambitious for their success as if they were our own children.
- We will respect and celebrate diversity and difference in children and families and ensure that it is properly understood and considered in the way that we provide services to individual children and their families.
- We will work hard to overcome discrimination and disadvantage in the way we deliver our services, including with those whose first language is not English.
- We will ensure that front line staff work in an environment that promotes good quality social work with families and that they have good quality supervision, manageable caseloads, the right up to date training, guidance, and the skills to do the job.
- We will use quality assurance, performance monitoring, and consultation with service users, frontline staff and partner agencies to constantly learn and improve our practice.
- The voice and experiences of children and their parents and carers who use our services will be known and heard by frontline staff, senior managers and leaders and used to shape and improve them.
- We will be honest, consistent, fair and transparent in the way that we deliver our decisions, policies and actions.

## Laying the foundation towards excellence

This plan builds on the Children's Service Improvement Action Plan June 2016 - October 2017, which sets out how the service is responding to the specific recommendations and issues raised in the Ofsted Report. To rebuild the service will take time and effort. But our primary focus will be on building an environment that promotes good social work practice and getting the simple things done well on casework.

This plan sets out the specific steps and directions required to improve frontline practice and create an environment that supports good social work practice.

### The priority themes

- **Theme 1** – Improving safeguarding practice to ensure we provide better help and protection
- **Theme 2** – Improving practice to children looked after
- **Theme 3** – Improving practice to care leavers
- **Theme 4** – Improving practice through better leadership and management
- **Theme 5** – Improving practice in adoption
- **Theme 6** – Improving practice - tackling child sexual exploitation, children missing and gangs
- **Theme 7** – Improving practice - commissioning and procurement to support social work practice
- **Theme 8** – Leadership team - enablers



## THEME 1

# IMPROVING SAFEGUARDING PRACTICE TO ENSURE WE PROVIDE BETTER HELP AND PROTECTION

Children and young people must experience timely and effective multi-agency help and protection through risk-based assessment, authoritative practice, planning and review that secures change. Thresholds will be appropriate, understood and operate effectively. Records of action and decision will be clear and up to date. Children and young people will be listened to and heard. Risk will be well understood, managed and regularly reviewed.

### WHAT PRACTICE ISSUES ARE WE TRYING TO ADDRESS?

- Thresholds are not consistently applied and/or understood.
- Analysis of risk is weak (risk tools are underutilised) which means that cases are often closed or stepped down too early and timely actions are not taken when risks or concerns escalate or diminish. Chronologies are not being used as an effective assessment and analysis tool - they are not succinct and clear.
- Strategy discussions do not comply with statutory guidance - they are happening too late, not often enough and without full involvement of the range of multi-agency partners.
- Children's wishes and feelings are not properly explored and there is inconsistency of direct work to support children to express their views.
- There is insufficient contingency planning and parents are not sufficiently clear about what they need to do and the consequences of not working with the local authority.
- Children remain on child protection plans for too long without robust action being taken. Independent Reviewing Officers and Child Protection Chairs do not sufficiently challenge and scrutinise to ensure that plans are working. The number of actions from escalation in year are low.
- Practice standards and expectations have not been explicitly set and communicated to frontline social workers.
- Management oversight is weak and does not provide authoritative and timely intervention leading to drift and delay in taking action needed. Supervision does not set targets and timescales effectively, and previous actions are not reviewed or challenged sufficiently.
- Children's Social Care does not have a robust audit schedule in place to monitor regularly and identify practice issues.
- Front-line teams have experienced difficulties recruiting to vacancies in key posts. Social worker caseloads are too high (25 for help and protection) and this is impacting in the quality of work with children.

## AND WE CAN IMPROVE PRACTICE BY:

- Having good quality chronologies, risk assessments and analysis lead to appropriate child in need, early help and child protection plans, which are SMART and clearly linked to assessed risk and need.
- Ensuring that decisions to step up or step down are appropriate, accord with thresholds and are based on a thorough understanding of the child and families' needs.
- Ensuring that strategy meetings will be held when we need to assess whenever a child is at risk of significant harm and will involve all the right partners.
- Ensuring that social workers spend time with children, undertaking direct work to understand their experiences, views, wishes and feelings.
- Making sure children and their parents will understand the plan and will contribute to planning.
- Ensuring that contingency plans will be on all children's care plans, and they will be clear and specific about what the alternative plan is for the child if things don't go to plan.
- Making sure supervision is reflective and task focussed, setting out clear actions and timescales, and reviewing progress against actions.
- Making sure that where cases are not progressing then they will be stepped up authoritatively at the right time.
- Making sure that the actions required through the Independent Reviewing Officers and Child Protection Chairs escalation procedure are progressing fast enough.
- Ensuring that senior managers will review and scrutinise all cases that are not progressing effectively to challenge practice and ensure the right plan is put in place promptly.
- Making sure that homeless 16 and 17 year olds will be placed in safe and appropriate housing accommodation.
- Ensuring that children in private fostering arrangements are safe and monitored appropriately.

## AND WE ARE GOING TO DO THE FOLLOWING:

- We will ensure that we recruit appropriate permanent Heads of Services to oversee the improvements in our safeguarding practice.
- We will ensure that social workers have manageable caseloads through our caseload challenge process.
- We will ensure that we deliver social work through smaller teams to allow greater oversight and scrutiny by managers.
- We will introduce "triple lock" on cases for greater scrutiny in a number of practice areas.
- We will introduce practice improvement mentors to support social workers.
- We will re-launch our thresholds of needs to ensure that this is well understood through survey of our partners.
- We will ensure that we train our social workers on risk identification.
- We will ensure we have risk assessments on all our files.
- We will work on the quality of strategy meetings and section 47 investigations by having monthly action learning sets chaired by Head of Quality Improvement.
- We will run "getting to good seminars" monthly for cases that are inadequate or requiring improvement chaired by the Director of Children's Social Care.
- We will ensure that our Children in Need plans are independently chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer to achieve consistent application of thresholds on these cases, and implement immediately.
- We will ensure that our front-line staff and managers have undertaken refresher child protection training covering strategy meetings, risk analysis and assessments.
- We will devise an implementation plan for the roll out of Signs of Safety to key partner agencies including health colleagues, schools, police and the youth offending service, to embed this into multi-agency practice.
- We will have case summaries and chronologies on case files to ensure that the child's journey is easily understood.

- We will have SMART plans for Child in Need and Child Protection cases.
- We will set up a performance board to review performance monthly.
- We will review how we step up and step down cases and review links with early help services.
- We will review the quality of Common Assessment Frameworks (CAF) and early help services.
- We will ensure that we evidence the child's views in all we do.
- We will produce a directory of services commissioned and available services to children and their families in Bromley.
- We will review and update the Public Law Office (PLO) policy and set up a PLO board, chaired by the Director of Children's Social Care.
- We will have a dedicated social worker linked with schools.
- We will allocate our senior managers to schools' clusters to enable us work better with schools.
- We will devise effective mechanisms to feedback to agencies when referrals are made.
- We will set up a forum to consider Child Protection cases that are not progressing well.
- We will skill up our legal representatives so that they can present the best case that would safeguard our children in court.
- We shall improve the quality of our assessments and ensure they are completed without delays.
- We will review why some legal cases are not completed on time and why some cases drift and share our findings to all staff.
- We will provide independent advocates for children in need of help or safeguarding who need one.
- We will review how business support is provided to social workers.



## THEME 2

# IMPROVING PRACTICE TO CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER

High-quality assessments must be used to decide whether children and young people will become looked after. We will make sure care plans are regularly reviewed to ensure children and young people's current and developing needs continue to be met. Permanent homes and families will be found for children and young people without unnecessary delay, and adoption will be considered for all children, where appropriate. Children and young people will be listened to by social workers who will know them well, and when support is needed, they will be able to access it for if it is needed, throughout their childhood and beyond, no matter where they are living.

### WHAT PRACTICE ISSUES ARE WE TRYING TO ADDRESS?

- Management oversight of practice is a serious area of weakness at all levels. There is no senior manager with a single line of sight or overall responsibility for children looked after. There is little evidence of appropriate challenge by group managers and managers do not regularly scrutinise children's plan or the impact of social work.
- The processes for safely returning children home are inadequate, with senior managers not consistently authorising assessments and decisions prior to children returning home.
- Permanency arrangements are underdeveloped and there is a lack of urgency in finding permanent homes for children, and delays in long term matching.
- Placement planning and matching is poor, is not always timely and lacks clear information, actions and delegated authority. There are delays in long term matches going to panel and quality of reports is variable, lacking analysis.
- There is a lack of local placements to meet the diverse needs of our looked after children and young people, including care leavers.
- Placement plans lack important information, are sometimes late, are not updated, and lack explanation of delegated authority. They do not contain the information that carers require to understand the arrangements for children's care.
- Contact arrangements between parents and children are not sufficiently risk assessed or managed.
- The virtual school lacks the capacity to support young people aged 16+, including the cohort of young people dropping out of school in year 12.
- Where children are placed in residential homes out of borough, checks are not routinely done to ensure educational and health provision and to understand any local risks of sexual exploitation, before making the placement.

## AND WE CAN IMPROVE PRACTICE BY:

- Ensuring that children will be taken into care at the right time, and when the legal grounds are met.
- Making sure children receive swift and effective support to help them find permanent families that meet their needs well. All children who cannot return home permanently will be considered for adoption.
- Ensuring that children are carefully matched to a placement that best meets their holistic needs with consultation with the Independent Reviewing Officers, Virtual School Head Teacher, and designated Children Looked After nurse where appropriate.
- Making sure that children placed outside the local authority will not be placed until the arrangements around education and health and any other risk factors in the locality have been considered.
- Ensuring that children will have contact with parents and family members after carefully assessed risk, and where it is safe and suitable for them. Contact arrangements, their purpose, value and frequency will be clearly considered and recorded in the Care Plan.
- Making sure that the Virtual School Head Teacher will support children looked after and care leavers up to 25.
- Ensuring that children are listened to, practice is focused on their needs and experiences and influenced by their wishes and feelings or, where they cannot represent their view themselves, those advocated on their behalf.
- Making sure that good quality life story work will be completed with all children in long-term care.
- We will ensure that we deliver social work through smaller teams to allow greater oversight and scrutiny by managers.
- We will develop a Children Looked After Strategy that sets out our aspirations for children looked after as corporate parents.
- We will review how we identify and support children who are privately fostered.
- We will establish a dedicated connected person's team to drive performance.
- We will review Permanency Planning Meetings (PPMS) and use of the tracker to ensure that every child is achieving permanency without delay and has the right permanency option.
- We will ensure we have risk assessments on all our files.
- We will run getting to good seminars monthly for cases that are inadequate or requiring improvement chaired by the Director of Children's Social Care.
- We will develop a comprehensive Corporate Parenting Strategy.
- We will develop practice standards for social workers on how to communicate and work effectively with children looked after.
- We will set up a placements panel to oversee children coming into care and the quality of placement matching.
- We will set up a forum to consider Child Looked After cases that are not progressing well.
- We will set up a performance board to review performance monthly.
- We will undertake a review of Private Fostering arrangements and develop a SMART improvement plan to ensure systems are in place meet statutory requirements.

## AND WE ARE GOING TO DO THE FOLLOWING:

- We will establish a dedicated children looked after service to oversee the services that we provide.
- We will ensure that social workers have manageable caseloads.
- We will review the sufficiency strategy setting and ensure we have sufficient provisions for children looked after.
- We will review how we recruit foster carers to provide placement choice to children looked after.

- We will provide independent advocates to children looked after requiring one.
- We will review how business support is provided to social workers.
- We will work with our colleagues in health and ensure that the health needs of our children are met
- We will undertake a review of our virtual school for children looked after.
- We will review Independent Reviewing Officers caseloads and strengthen the Independent Reviewing Officer challenge, and scrutiny of Children Looked After Plans.

## THEME 3

# IMPROVING PRACTICE TO CARE LEAVERS

Young people leaving care and preparing to leave care need to receive the right support to help them to make a successful transition to adulthood. We are committed to helping care leavers make effective plans to leave care that address their individual needs, so they are safe and feel safe, particularly where they live. Care leavers in Bromley will be able to successfully access education, employment, training and safe, suitable, housing; and will enjoy stable and enduring relationships with staff and carers who meet their needs.

### WHAT PRACTICE ISSUES ARE WE TRYING TO ADDRESS?

- There is an insufficient range of safe and suitable housing for care leavers, which is not supporting positive outcomes for vulnerable care leavers.
- Not enough work is done to assess the risks to and engage more vulnerable care leavers, particularly those aged over 18 years with more challenging behaviours.
- Pathway plans are too vague, with unclear steps for care leavers to reach their goals, and no contingency plans in place.
- Social workers and personal advisors do not engage successfully with more challenging young people.
- Too many care leavers are not in education, employment or training, and too few in Higher Education.
- Too many young people leave care without access to their health histories.
- The setting up home allowance is provided too late meaning young people are moving into their accommodation with it not fully equipped.
- Management oversight is not effective enough and managers do not intervene quickly enough when outcomes for young people are not improving or when young people do not engage.

### AND WE CAN IMPROVE PRACTICE BY:

- Ensuring we have appropriate accommodation options for care leavers that eliminate the need to use bed and breakfast accommodation, where they feel safe and supported.
- We can assess the risk to care leavers in potential accommodation prior to placing young people.
- We can be more persistent in reaching out to, engaging and supporting harder to reach young care leavers.

- Making sure that young people are actively engaged in education, employment or training which leads to sustainable long-term employment and independence.
- Ensuring that young people are clear about their own health and know how to access support and advice in the future.
- Making sure that social workers and personal advisers are proactive, determined and creative in their approach to engage the more vulnerable care leavers with more challenging behaviours.
- Making sure that pathway plans are SMART, individualised, with clear steps to help care leavers to reach their goals. Contingency plans are set out clearly.
- We will have action learning sets chaired by the Head of Service in pathway plans and Personal Education Plans.
- We will run getting to good seminars monthly for cases that are inadequate or requiring improvement chaired by the Director of Children's Social Care.
- We will set up a performance board to review performance monthly.
- We will review how business support is provided to social workers.
- We will work with our colleagues in health and ensure that the health needs of our children are met and that they know about their health passports.
- We will develop an ambitious education, employment and training strategy for care leavers.
- We will develop an information guide for care leavers that sets out the support available to them.

#### **AND WE ARE GOING TO DO THE FOLLOWING:**

- We will establish a dedicated children leaving care service to oversee the services that we provide.
- We will ensure that social workers have manageable caseloads.
- We will ensure that we deliver social work through smaller teams to allow greater oversight and scrutiny by managers.
- We will develop a care leavers strategy that sets out our aspirations for children leaving care in training, accommodation and employments.
- We will assess the risk to all care leavers and all accommodation prior to placing young people.
- We will monitor how often young people leaving care are seen by their worker and be persistent and proactive in engaging them.
- We will review the plans for children leaving care through an independent person.
- We will train all our staff and ensure that our pathway plans are SMART.
- We will review and have a clear policy on accommodation for care leavers.
- We will revise the financial support we give care leavers.

## THEME 4

# IMPROVING PRACTICE THROUGH BETTER LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

All managers need to have a good line of sight over practice to ensure there is robust and timely child-centred case work planning. Critical enquiry and quality assurance is needed at all levels of practice, from front-line staff, to managers, to independent reviewing officers, multi-agency partners and senior managers. All plans must be SMART, with rigorous oversight and follow up to drive forward the continuous cycle of service improvement and good quality practice, leading to better outcomes for children and families.

### WHAT PRACTICE ISSUES ARE WE TRYING TO ADDRESS?

- Management oversight is weak and does not provide authoritative and timely intervention, which leads to drift and delay on cases.
- Children in need cases and children and young people subject to Section 20 arrangements are not monitored centrally by senior managers.
- Casework supervision does not consistently set targets and timescales. Line managers need to review previous actions agreed in supervision sessions to maintain oversight of progress, and to review and challenge sufficiently.
- Challenge from Independent Reviewing Officers and Child Protection Chairs is not robust enough, and escalations have not been used effectively to challenge poor practice and concerns on cases.
- The quality assurance framework is weak and does not drive rigorous performance management or improve the standards of social work practice and casework.
- The service has experienced difficulties in recruiting to vacancies in key posts and in frontline teams. Because of this, current caseloads are too high for social workers to undertake good quality work.
- Performance management processes are not used sufficiently to drive improvement and there is lack of critical enquiry at senior management level.

### AND WE CAN IMPROVE PRACTICE BY:

- Ensuring we have consistently good quality practice which is child centred, timely and evidence based.
- Making sure that our social workers are supported by their managers and receive reflective supervision that is frequent, outcome focussed, with clear actions and timescales, and where previous actions are reviewed regularly.

- Ensuring that our Independent Reviewing Officers and Child Protection Chairs challenge poor practice and take actions promptly following escalation.
- Making sure that our performance monitoring and scrutiny is undertaken at all management levels and is used to drive improvements.
- Ensuring that practice standards are clear to all staff and drive minimum standards of practice and poor practice and competency issues are challenged robustly.
- Ensuring that the quality assurance framework is holistic, with a clear programme of audits will be used to inform managers of performance issues and themes for children in Bromley and results in continuous learning and improvement in practice.
- Making sure that all cases have clear SMART outcome focused plans that prevent drift and delay.
- Ensuring that social workers have manageable caseloads and time for good quality direct work with children.
- We will review the Children Social Care escalation policy for Independent Reviewing Officers and Child Protection Chairs to ensure they challenge poor practice and that alerts receive robust action.
- We will share findings from practice alerts with social workers and managers' monthly.
- We will publish position statements on key areas of practice on a quarterly basis and use this mechanism to improve practice.
- We will review the current supervision policy for staff setting out minimum frequency for formal supervision and our expectations.
- We will have mandatory practice related training in place for all our staff and managers and workshops to revisit “what a good assessment/ care plan looks like”.
- We will launch a new practice standards that sets out the high expectations, high support and high challenge for practice.
- We will review all our policies and procedures to aid practice.
- We will strengthen the work of the Bromley Safeguarding Children’s Board by recruiting a new chair, auditor and professional adviser to the board to enable the board to be well placed to challenge, support and scrutinise practice.
- We will create small social work teams and ensure there are clear lines of sight between managers and social workers.
- We will develop a leading-edge caseload management policy that allows social work to flourish.
- We will recruit and support social workers working in Bromley.

#### **AND WE ARE GOING TO DO THE FOLLOWING:**

- We will develop a new quality assurance framework and undertake monthly casework audits – Child Protection, Child in Need and Children Looked After, introduce thematic audits covering several areas including children placed at home on full care orders, children ceasing to be looked after and ensure we have thorough management oversight of this.
- We will introduce monthly audit feedback practice sessions to share findings of audits and introduce audit weeks and track for progress over time.
- We will revise our performance digest to ensure that we use data and performance activity to improve our practice.
- We will undertake risk assessments of all open cases on a quarterly basis.
- We will have a specialist Children in Need chair to independently review Children in Need cases.

## THEME 5

# IMPROVING PRACTICE IN ADOPTION

Adoption will be considered for all children who are unable to return home to their birth families and who need a permanent alternative home. We are committed to improving our adoption processes so that a sense of urgency and care is given in all our adoption work, including the appropriate use of concurrent and parallel planning, so that suitable adoptive families are identified for children without delay.

### WHAT PRACTICE ISSUES ARE WE TRYING TO ADDRESS?

- Not enough children are adopted, much lower than the national average.
- Not enough children are considered for adoption, even though they are unable to return to their birth parents, or if they are it's not considered at the earliest opportunity.
- There is too much delay in the adoption process.
- There is a lack of urgency in pursuing permanency options for children, over optimistic assessments of parents, too many opportunities given to birth family before decisive action is taken to adopt, plans for adoption are changed resulting in some children remaining uncertain about their futures for too long. Some children's care plans are consecutive planned rather than twin tracked while assessments are on-going.
- Family finding is overly focused on finding an ethnic match at the expense of the other needs of the child, including timeliness, and this causes unnecessary delay.
- Adoption assessments take too long to start from initial contact.
- Fostering to adopt placements are under developed.
- Child permanency reports need better analysis of how the childhood trauma might have an affect in adult life.
- Life story work lacks critical information, and is not always completed in a timely way.
- Processes within the adoption service lack tight management, are not focused around the child's timescales, and are too tolerant of drift and delay.

### AND WE CAN IMPROVE PRACTICE BY:

- All children who cannot return to their home permanently will be considered for adoption.



- Making sure that children receive swift and effective support to find permanent families that meet their needs well.
- Making sure that more children are adopted; this will be done more quickly and be in line with the time taken by the best performing local authorities.
- Ensuring that placements for children available for adoption will prioritise timeliness and quality of care over finding exact ethnic matches.
- Ensuring that arrangements to recruit new adoptive parents are effective and timely; children will be available for adoption where this is appropriate in a timely way and matched to good quality adoptive parents swiftly.
- Foster to adopt placements will be developed to reduce the number of moves children make and the time it takes to move into an adoptive placement.
- Ensuring that life story work is completed with children in long-term care.
- We will set up a dedicated Court Team specialising in pre-proceedings work.
- We will undertake an adoption diagnostic and implement its findings.
- We will develop a foster to adopt strategy and concurrent placements.
- We will contribute to the pan adoption regionalisation of family finding.
- We recruit, support and ensure that adopters are trained and improve our matching process.

#### **AND WE ARE GOING TO DO THE FOLLOWING:**

- We will ensure that we have appropriate senior manager leadership overseeing our work in this area.
- We will improve the timeliness of adoption by improving our assessments of parental capacity to change, tighter Public Law Outline processes, using a specialist Court team, more decisive care planning and more rigorous twin tracking as early as possible in the child's journey.
- We will have a greater focus on adoption because of our realignment.
- We will redraft the permanency policy.
- We will have permanency planning meetings to ensure that we twin track plans effectively and at the earliest possible point.
- We will develop a new adoption process that is SMART.
- We will develop a new adoption tracker tool.

## THEME 6

# IMPROVING PRACTICE - TACKLING CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION, CHILDREN MISSING AND GANGS

We and our partners do not yet have a strategic overview of the risks to children missing and/or at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation. The systems for scrutinising, analysing and evaluating the outcomes for children missing or at risk of sexual exploitation are under developed. Key intelligence from return home interviews is not being used to cross-reference with children at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation or gangs to form an understanding of trends and patterns and the reasons why children are going missing. Operationally, the work to safeguard children missing or at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation is poorly coordinated and inconsistent: it is marked by police delays in informing social care when a child goes missing or has returned. Return home interviews are delayed and in most cases, it is unclear whether one has taken place. Procedures for children who go missing are not effectively applied and the risks to children from Child Sexual Exploitation or trafficking are not well understood by the people working with them. This reduces their capacity to manage the risks to these children.

### WHAT PRACTICE ISSUES ARE WE TRYING TO ADDRESS?

- The response to children missing or at risk of child sexual exploitation is underdeveloped, inconsistent and uncoordinated. Delays in police notifications mean it is not clear when children first go missing and when they return.
- Return home interviews are delayed and in most cases vague responses are being obtained from young people who have been missing.
- Performance data on children missing and child sexual exploitation is not collated or analysed sufficiently well to understand the profile of children missing and the links to sexual exploitation. There is no system in place to share and analyse information from child sexual exploitation risk assessments and return interviews, to reduce future risks for children and young people, and to inform partnership prevention and disruption activity.
- Child protection procedures for children missing from home, care or education or at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation, gangs or trafficking are inconsistently applied and there are too many delays.
- Information is not used or shared appropriately between partners and consequently the risks to these children are poorly understood nor managed.
- The partnership arrangements for identification and support of children and young people who are at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation, gang involvement or affiliation and/or missing are poorly coordinated and underdeveloped.
- Arrangements for managing Child Sexual Exploitation, missing and gangs related work needs to be centralised and coordinated to oversee, monitor and quality assure case work practice and collate and analyse trends to make intelligence links between places, children and perpetrators.

- The Multi-Agency Sexual Exploitation (MASE) Panel needs to be improved so it is more intelligence led, uses data more effectively to intervene strategically and operationally to reduce and manage risks to children.
- Where children are placed out of borough in residential homes, adequate checks and risk assessments are not being done around sexual exploitation before making the placement.

#### **AND WE CAN IMPROVE PRACTICE BY:**

- Ensuring that the work of Child Sexual Exploitation, missing children and gangs is overseen by a named strategic lead and activities will be centralised, with strong oversight, collation and analysis of data and information-sharing.
- Ensuring that a detailed problem profile and needs analysis to inform the work of the Multi-Agency Sexual Exploitation (MASE) Panel and Bromley Safeguarding Children Board (BSCB) is in place.
- Making sure that return home interviews are completed on time and information gathered used on both an individual case basis, and collated to help inform the wider partnership response.
- Making sure that we have a thorough risk assessment of all children who go missing or are at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation, gangs or trafficking and that these are managed and reduced through a robust care plan.
- Ensuring that senior managers have strong oversight of the issues and prevalence of Child Sexual Exploitation gangs and missing episodes in their area, the extent of risks to children and will use this to inform local commissioning decisions.
- Making sure that the support needs of children who are at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation or victims of Child Sexual Exploitation, trafficking, gangs or who go missing are reviewed and appropriate services commissioned to meet these needs.

#### **AND WE ARE GOING TO DO THE FOLLOWING:**

- The Director of Children’s Social Care and the Deputy Borough Commander in the police will be the strategic leads for Child Sexual Exploitation.
- We will appoint a dedicated resource in Children’s Social Care Services to lead on this strand of work.
- We will draw up a single central database, tracking sheet and action plan with RAG rating of all children at risk from missing, Child Sexual Exploitation, trafficking and/or gangs, to be overseen by the social care strategic lead and reviewed at each MASE meeting.
- We will set up a BSCB task and finish sub-group on Child Sexual Exploitation, missing, trafficked children and gangs, and develop terms of reference and membership for the group.
- We will undertake a full review of the multi-agency response and effectiveness of response to Child Sexual Exploitation, missing from home, care and education, gangs and trafficked children, with clear recommendations and action plan. The review will include governance arrangements and the MASE.
- We will review and revise the multi-agency policies, protocols and operating procedures on Child Sexual Exploitation, missing, trafficked children and gangs, to be signed off by the BSCB Policies and Procedures Sub-Group and disseminated to key staff across all agencies.
- We will develop a multi-agency performance data set on Child Sexual Exploitation, missing, trafficking and gangs which is used to monitor multiagency performance, to track and check on timeliness, application of procedures, and identify cross links between cases.
- We will undertake periodic audits of Child Sexual Exploitation, and return home interviews.
- We will up systems and reporting mechanisms to ensure Scrutiny Panel, MASE, BSCB and the Departmental Leadership Team can monitor the effectiveness of practice around missing, Child Sexual Exploitation, trafficked children and gangs.

- We will develop a MASE ‘problem profile’ based on a detailed analysis of trends and data of missing children, trafficking, gangs and Child Sexual Exploitation. Analysis to include: geographical patterns of sexual offending, mapping of offenders and children, hotspots, trends and profiles of Child Sexual Exploitation and missing, trafficking and gang related activity within Bromley and in proximity to Children Looked After placed out of borough.
- We will ensure that all returning Children Looked After and children missing from home are referred to a commissioned service for an independent return home interview, and that we hold a strategy meeting and have appropriate risk management plans on file.
- We will develop a missing from education working protocol.
- We will set up a ‘missing from education’ database, tracking sheet and action plan, to track children and ensure robust action is in place to ensure that they are returned to education with the minimum of delay.
- We will update the IT recording system for authorising out of borough placements, to require verification that checks have been made with the area around educational and health provision and/or risks around sexual exploitation have been checked first.

## THEME 7

# IMPROVING PRACTICE - COMMISSIONING AND PROCUREMENT TO SUPPORT SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

Commissioning activity will be well co-ordinated and evidence driven. Commissioned services will be informed by a clear evidence based strategy that will support children right through their journey from early help, to leaving care and adoption. It will adopt a fully multi-agency joined up approach to meeting children's needs with the wider partnership. In addition, the strategy will ensure that there are sufficient foster placements for the children who need a foster home, and appropriate provision for children leaving care. Commissioned services will be robustly reviewed and monitored for effectiveness.

### WHAT PRACTICE ISSUES ARE WE TRYING TO ADDRESS?

- A carefully planned, dedicated and child-centred commissioning strategy is required so that children and their families in Bromley are to benefit from it.
- Commissioning activity is fragmented, not evidence driven. The strategy and services to support early intervention and statutory services are fragmented this does not lead to effective joined up work with partner agencies.
- Some commissioned services are not robustly reviewed and monitored for their effectiveness.
- The availability of local foster placements and suitable placements for care leavers were not sufficient to ensure that there was sufficient choice to meet need. Although training and supervision was generally well received by foster carers, many felt that they were not considered as an important part of the professional team around the child.
- Too many care leavers were living in unsuitable accommodation including bed and breakfast accommodation.
- The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) is not used effectively to help evaluate what resources could be commissioned to ameliorate certain issues such as parental domestic abuse, mental health and those missing from home and care.

### AND WE CAN IMPROVE PRACTICE BY:

- Having a comprehensive integrated commissioning strategy in place to drive and deliver multi-agency, well-coordinated commissioning arrangements corporately.
- Ensuring the commissioning strategy makes best use of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and other performance data.

- Making sure that services are evaluated and reviewed regularly to ensure they are making a difference and improving circumstances for children, young people and families.
- Making sure that commissioned services are based on actual need and consider the views of young people and thorough risk assessments, ensuring safeguarding children and young people is understood and prioritised.
- Making sure that the number of local foster carers is increased.
- Ensure suitable accommodation is commissioned for homeless 16 and 17 year olds and care leavers, so they are safe and feel safe where they live.

**AND WE ARE GOING TO DO THE FOLLOWING:**

- We will appoint a Children’s Commissioner to lead on all commissioning arrangements.
- We will develop an integrated multi-agency commissioning strategy for children’s services.
- We will develop a sufficiency strategy to increase placement options, including placements for care leavers.
- We will recruit more foster carers and adopters.
- We will revise our JSNA to ensure that the needs of children are clearly articulated.
- We will launch the multi-agency violence against women and young girls’ strategy.
- We will set up a placements panel to ensure that when children come into care they have the right placements.
- We will set up robust monitoring arrangements for all commissioned services and contracts.

## THEME 8

# LEADERSHIP TEAM - ENABLERS

- We will realign our structure by bringing in additional capacity to foster greater accountability, improve lines of sight and enable us deliver social work in small clusters.
- We will oversee the delivery of our aspiration for children in Bromley.
- We will “get to the heart of practice” through our endeavours.
- We will provide the right environment for social work practice to flourish - including IT, Accommodation, meeting venues & times.
- We will communicate with social workers through quarterly forums.
- We will communicate with managers through monthly managers’ forum.
- We will spend at least two hours on the floor with social workers on a weekly basis.
- We will reduce caseloads and introduce a caseload promise in Bromley.
- We will set up the social work advisory group.
- We will run multi-agency practice development sessions every other month with our partners.
- We will observe one supervision session monthly.
- We will have a staff surgery with social workers to discuss practice issues.
- We will set up dedicated social work recruitment and retention board.
- We will develop a line of sight approach for senior managers.
- We will publish a “practice based training plan” for social workers and managers.
- We will work with the Bromley Safeguarding Children Board.
- We will provide safeguarding accountability reports to Members, the Commissioner, Independent Chair of the Children’s Services Improvement Governance Board and the Bromley Safeguarding Children Board.
- We will provide additional social work capacity and managers where this is required to safeguard children.
- We will revamp our partnership boards to focus more on outcomes for children.
- We will define our social work approach once we have established a safe practice baseline - signs of safety or relational social work.
- We will establish a knowledge transfer programme with a leading university once we have established a safe practice baseline.
- We will partake in national practice leaders’ programmes once we have established a safe practice baseline.
- We will establish relationships at a strategic level with the judiciary, CAFCASS and national government departments once we have established a safe practice baseline.
- We will implement a new IT system for social workers, developed by social workers.
- We will equip our Elected member on “what to know about challenging practice”.

## How can you contribute to our journey towards excellence?

My approach to leadership is about building partnerships with staff, our children and their families. I want every person who works in this department to understand and believe that they have a voice and the right to be heard and valued.

As we begin our journey towards becoming good, I rely upon each of you to work alongside me to deliver the best outcomes for our children and their families. We need to communicate well with each other and be determined, ambitious and innovative for our children in Bromley.

I also want you to believe that we can achieve our dreams together for children in Bromley if we are determined, focussed and confident that we have what it take to change outcomes for the most vulnerable children in our society. By doing simple things well, you can make the differences required of you.

I will be very demanding of you and in turn I expect you to be demanding of me in leading our department towards excellence. If we work together, we will provide good services to our children and we will celebrate our achievements together.

I am keen to hear your thoughts and feedback on the vision, values, and priorities laid out in this document.

Please feel free to come to one of my staff surgeries or the social work advisory group or email me directly at [ade.adetosoye@bromley.gov.uk](mailto:ade.adetosoye@bromley.gov.uk) with any comments or suggestions you have.



**Ade Adetosoye OBE**

Deputy Chief Executive and  
Executive Director: Education, Care and Health Services  
December 2016











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