

# TOWARDS EXCELLENCE

## BIRMINGHAM CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PLAN 2012-15



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## **1. Introduction**

This plan describes and shapes some of the work of the Children's Strategic Partnership. It sets out areas of focus for children's services in Birmingham over the next three years. It particularly concerns those issues where partners need to work together to secure progress.

It builds on the focus in the 2011-14 plan on protecting children from significant harm, improving engagement in learning and achievement in education, and reducing health inequalities. In the wider system there are already detailed implementation plans for improving the safeguarding of children and young people, for improving their health and for improving their engagement in learning and achievement in education. This plan does not replicate these other plans. It identifies a number of key developments in those plans which particularly require multi-agency engagement. The Children's Strategic Partnership – through its collective strength – will bring a focus and urgency to those developments.

## **2. Vision**

Our vision for children's services in Birmingham is that:

“Every child in every part of the city should achieve their potential. We will provide early help and support to those children and families who need it and, working together, will ensure that every child has the belief, aspiration and support to be their best.”

### 3. Context

We can only deliver the services and outcomes that our children and young people need and deserve by working more effectively together. This will be even more the case in future with a growing younger population, stark health inequalities, a difficult economic climate, and complex social problems. A common strategic theme to this work is promoting equality, focussing particularly on those children who need most support.

The themes outlined below reinforce our key concerns: tackling inequality and deprivation, promoting social cohesion across all communities in Birmingham, and ensuring safeguarding for children.

#### **Improved health**

Our priorities also complement local health objectives, which are based on Marmot, and are clear about the need to address differences in life expectancy (with a focus on perinatal and infant mortality), good mental wellbeing across the population, inequalities in health, and reducing the burden of preventable non-communicable disease including harm from tobacco, alcohol and drugs. This plan complements and informs the draft Health and Wellbeing Strategy which will act as a framework to guide and support the development of commissioning plans for healthcare, social care and public health, to be delivered through commissioning decisions of the clinical commissioning groups and the Local Authority.

We will take forward together a small number of transformation projects - practical actions/projects that the health and social care system will commit to carrying out together and which underpin some of the safeguarding improvement actions described in the plan. These will be city-wide, significantly improve services and outcomes, and help us to make best use of scarce resources.

A number of co-commissioning groups have been established around services where joint approaches were already established or were thought most likely to benefit from this approach to make recommendations through the Children and

Young People's Joint Strategic Delivery Group to clinical commissioning groups, the Local Authority, Cluster, and the Health & Wellbeing Board.

### **Improved safeguarding**

Birmingham has a Safeguarding Improvement Plan - drawn up to address the issues of concern raised by Ofsted inspections of children's services. It is a multi-agency plan and includes actions aimed at ensuring long term and sustainable improvements in safeguarding, as signalled clearly in the Safeguarding Improvement Notice issued by the Department for Education.

In response to the above challenges Birmingham has changed the way services are delivered to children, young people and their families, in partnership with health, the police and the voluntary sector. Integrated Family Support Teams (IFSTs) are at the heart of this change. They bring together different professionals and ensure there is a lead professional to co-ordinate plans for children, young people and families. IFSTs are based in a locality and work closely with universal settings in that area including schools, colleges, children's centres and GP practices. They aim to meet the needs of children who require additional support beyond that which the universal setting can offer, providing early intervention and support for families whose needs are below the threshold for social care and specialist support. These teams link closely to aligned child protection teams and city-wide teams supporting children with complex needs, those in care and those with complex disability and health needs. This approach makes more effective use of resources through integrated multi-agency working and teams, and will ensure additional and specialist support for those children who need such support.

Our aim is to work with partners so that safeguarding improves to a consistently excellent standard by ensuring we have excellent support services to allow children to be kept safely at home wherever possible and, in cases where children need to be looked after, care is of the highest standard, with timely adoption and fostering placements used to provide an environment where children will thrive.

## **Improved achievement**

With respect to learning and attainment in schools we have seen year-on-year progress in terms of educational achievement across the city. But there are a small number of primary and secondary schools that have been below the floor standard for a number of years which may be in need of a more radical solution than the continued intervention from a school improvement adviser or support from a neighbouring school. Our emphasis is on facilitating school-to-school support, with autonomous schools securing external support from a variety of providers, and outstanding and good schools providing peer support and challenge. We have a school improvement strategy that recognises that some of our schools have very talented leaders and that we want to use that expertise to support others. Our work has focused upon providing immediate support to those schools deemed most vulnerable, whilst developing the systems and structures to make sure school improvement activities are undertaken across the city in a coherent and focused way.

The establishment of the new school improvement groups chaired by head teachers has been a key part in our developing strategy with schools and in our discussions with the DfE to convince them that we are doing everything we can to support schools which are struggling and to agree the way forward for them.

We are committed to delivering the best education possible for all the city's children and young people with all achieving their full potential. Our aim is that none of the city's schools are below the floor targets, none are in an Ofsted category and that we strive for all of our schools to be at least good, with many outstanding. We aim to continue to raise achievement at Key Stages 2 and 4, with a focus on English and maths.

All of the above illustrates, briefly, the need for urgent progress on a number of issues, particularly safeguarding, and much of that progress is dependent on the collective efforts of partners across the system.

## 4. Priorities and actions

Our vision and the drive to ensure children and young people are safe, healthy and engaged in learning will be delivered through a focus on six key priorities. The priorities and associated actions are described below.

**Prevention**...ensuring children, young people and families receive the right and early help to head off further difficulties and to enable children and young people to remain at home safely.

- We will strengthen early intervention and preventative support by agreeing an early help strategy and embedding the common assessment framework across all partners, leading to timely and effective multi-agency interventions.
- We will clarify and enhance parenting support – focussing, for example, on mapping a pathway of support, and linking that to a menu/directory of support.
- We will put in place a number of public health interventions designed to tackle infant mortality, obesity and smoking.

**Integration**...through partnership working with schools, children's centres and other partners effectively supporting children and young people's transition between different services and phases, and maximising opportunities to combine resources to improve efficiency and create better services for citizens.

- We will create an inter-dependent school system through a new innovative Birmingham Cooperative Partnership, an "Umbrella Trust", to support collaboration across schools.

- We will improve support for children with complex needs (0-5) – focussing, for example, on a better understanding of need and of priorities and thresholds for service.
- We will integrate social care and primary care functions – focussing on, for example, the role of IFSTs and considering co-location in general practice/primary care, and strengthening the Common Assessment and linking it with work in adult services around common assessment and information sharing.
- We will improve and strengthen arrangements and support for transitions – focussing on the difficulties experienced by young people moving into adult services, particularly in relation to mental health and learning difficulties, smoothing out the pathway with early assessment, reduced duplication and speedier assessment.

**Aspiration**...improving children's aspiration and self-belief by supporting parents and all those who work with children and young people to recognise their role in raising self-esteem.

- We will introduce an Enterprise Award for Birmingham schools to assist with the development of an enterprise culture in all schools.
- We will use the Skills for Growth Compact to commit employers, colleges and schools to building a best-in-class skills service to link pupils and learners with real-world work opportunities. Our ambition is to recruit 25% of local businesses to the Compact by 2015.
- We will raise the career and skills aspirations of young people and actively support the 3 year Skills Show and associated campaign.
- We will promote to young people the value of continuing in education and training as part of their career and employment aspirations.

**Safeguarding**... raising awareness about everyone's responsibility for safeguarding children and young people, and by effectively supporting vulnerable children, young people and families.

- We will ensure a consistent understanding and application of thresholds by all partners.
- We will improve the quality of all agencies' safeguarding assessments and ensure appropriate decision-making through better supervision, management oversight, audits and learning and development.
- We will ensure partner agency contributions to protecting children are properly agreed, planned, understood and recorded on the child's file.
- We will improve the experiences of and outcomes for children in care and care leavers through more stable placements and improved support related to learning, employability and housing, drawing on all partners in their roles as corporate parents.
- We will transform performance on adoption across children's social care.
- We will work together to increase the scale and quality of fostering arrangements, with more places commissioned and more children fostered at an early point.
- We will heighten community awareness of safeguarding issues and help communities deal responsibly with child safety.

**Participation**...involving children and young people, parents, carers and the wider community in the development, review and delivery of services and acting upon what they tell us in a joined-up way.

- We will secure feedback from children, young people and parents on the impact of partners' safeguarding support.

- We will establish standardised tools to obtain feedback from children, young people and families on “distance travelled and family learning”, to be used in service design and development.
- We will establish both parent and child/young person stakeholder groups in each quadrant of the city to secure direct engagement and feedback on services and their impact.

**Excellence through partnership**... providing support and challenge, delivering or commissioning high quality services which reduce inequalities of outcomes between identified groups, and recognising and celebrating successful practice and outcomes.

- We will secure inspirational leadership across the multi-agency partnership with clear direction around a common vision and agenda.
- We will ensure children in need experience consistently good services from all agencies, timely and aligned to their needs.
- We will deliver the Troubled Families programme whereby partners will combine information and resources to secure better outcomes for over 4,000 families. This programme will help to transform how organisations across the city work together.
- We will work with schools, universities and the business community to introduce a Birmingham Baccalaureate. This will be a new ‘Standard of Achievement’ which places enterprise education centre-stage, guaranteeing a job interview or training to every young applicant who achieves accreditation. This will be designed to equip our young people for the world of work and to make the most of the opportunities open to them. It will build on the core of the subjects in the English Baccalaureate, but also bring together the skills and competencies developed through education, work experience, training, volunteering, the creative arts, sports and participation in civic life.

## 5. What will excellence look like by 2015?

The cumulative impact of the above actions will be seen in the following ways:

- More children kept safely with their families
  - More children who are in care placed for adoption and fostering
  - More families receiving support at lower tier thresholds
  - Better quality assessments of and responses to children in need
  - Fewer young people involved in crime and risky behaviour
  - Fewer re-referrals of children to social care
- 
- Increased attainment at Foundation stage and key stages 2 and 4
  - All schools above floor targets
  - All schools judged by Ofsted are at least good, with many outstanding
  - More children ready to start school
- 
- Fewer young people who are not in education, employment or training
  - A reduced gap between the lowest achieving 20% of children at early years, foundation and key stages 2 and 4
- 
- More children living healthier lifestyles
  - Lower levels of childhood obesity
  - Lower levels of infant mortality
  - Fewer under 18 conceptions
  - Fewer hospital admissions for children and young people for intentional or unintentional injury

We will establish a baseline and targets for the above measures and, together, we will track our progress, challenging and supporting each other on our journey towards excellence.

## 6. Governance

The Children's Strategic Partnership Board's terms of reference have been revised to ensure it is a more strategic body with a focus on urgent joint actions to improve outcomes for children and young people. It includes the Cabinet Member for Children and Family Services and the Cabinet Member for Health & Wellbeing, plus members from health (including the Director of Public Health), police, voluntary sector, schools and the Birmingham Children's Safeguarding Board.

The Partnership is accountable for the collective performance of partners and the achievement of improved outcomes where those depend upon integrated, multi-agency, collaborative actions. It is clear about the need to work closely with the Birmingham Safeguarding Children Board on improving safeguarding and the Health and Wellbeing Board on addressing health and other inequalities. Individual agencies and organisations remain responsible for their individual contribution and performance and some outcomes are shared with other partnerships through, for example, the city's Health and Wellbeing Board.

The Birmingham Safeguarding Children Board monitors the effectiveness of collaborative working to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children and young people in the city. It holds the members of the Children's Strategic Partnership Board to account for the delivery of its safeguarding objectives. A multi-agency scorecard is being developed to help the Board in its monitoring role.

An interim Health and Wellbeing Board is in place to improve the strategic co-ordination of commissioning across NHS, social care and related children's and public health services. The Board brings together local commissioners of health and social care, elected members, and a representative of Birmingham Local Involvement Network (LINK) pending establishment of local Healthwatch, the new local consumer champion across health and social care.

Strategic joint commissioning is being developed further as part of the Health and Wellbeing Board arrangements, building on the established children's Joint

Strategic Delivery Group which comprises commissioners from the City Council and health.

The city's Education and Vulnerable Children Overview and Scrutiny Committee monitors, reviews and scrutinises the work of children's services, with a focus on outcomes for vulnerable children and young people.

Progress on improvements in children's safeguarding are reported to the independently-chaired Birmingham Safeguarding and Children in Care Improvement Board, established at the time of the first Improvement Notice.

Regular reports to these bodies outline progress and identify further actions needed to achieve agreed outcomes. Indicators of progress are both qualitative and quantitative.

Within a School Improvement context, a Primary School Improvement Group and a Secondary School to School Partnership Group have been established, chaired by National Leaders in Education head teachers. The Chairs of these Improvement Groups meet with the Strategic Director and Lead Member for Children and Family Services on a regular basis and, in turn, provide update reports to the Children's Strategic Partnership, the Education and Vulnerable Children Overview and Scrutiny Committee and stakeholder groups, including schools and governors fora.