 <i>Clinical Commissioning Group</i>	<b>Health and Wellbeing Board</b> 27 March 2018
	<b>Report from the Strategic Director, Children and Young People</b>
<b>Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS)</b>	
<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All
<b>Key or Non-Key Decision:</b>	N/A
<b>Open or Part/Fully Exempt:</b>	Open
<b>No. of Appendices:</b>	One
<b>Background Papers:</b>	None
<b>Contact Officers:</b>	Brian Grady Operational Director, Safeguarding, Partnerships and Strategy Tel: 020 8937 4173 <a href="mailto:Brian.grady@brent.gov.uk">Brian.grady@brent.gov.uk</a>  Nigel Chapman Operational Director, Integration and Improved Outcomes Tel: 0208 937 4387 <a href="mailto:Nigel.chapman@brent.gov.uk">Nigel.chapman@brent.gov.uk</a>

## 1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1. This reports provides Health and Wellbeing Board with an overview of the new framework for the Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS), Brent's progress since the previous inspection and preparation for the new arrangements.

## 2.0 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 That the Board note this report and comment on partnership contributions to preparation.

## 3.0 Detail

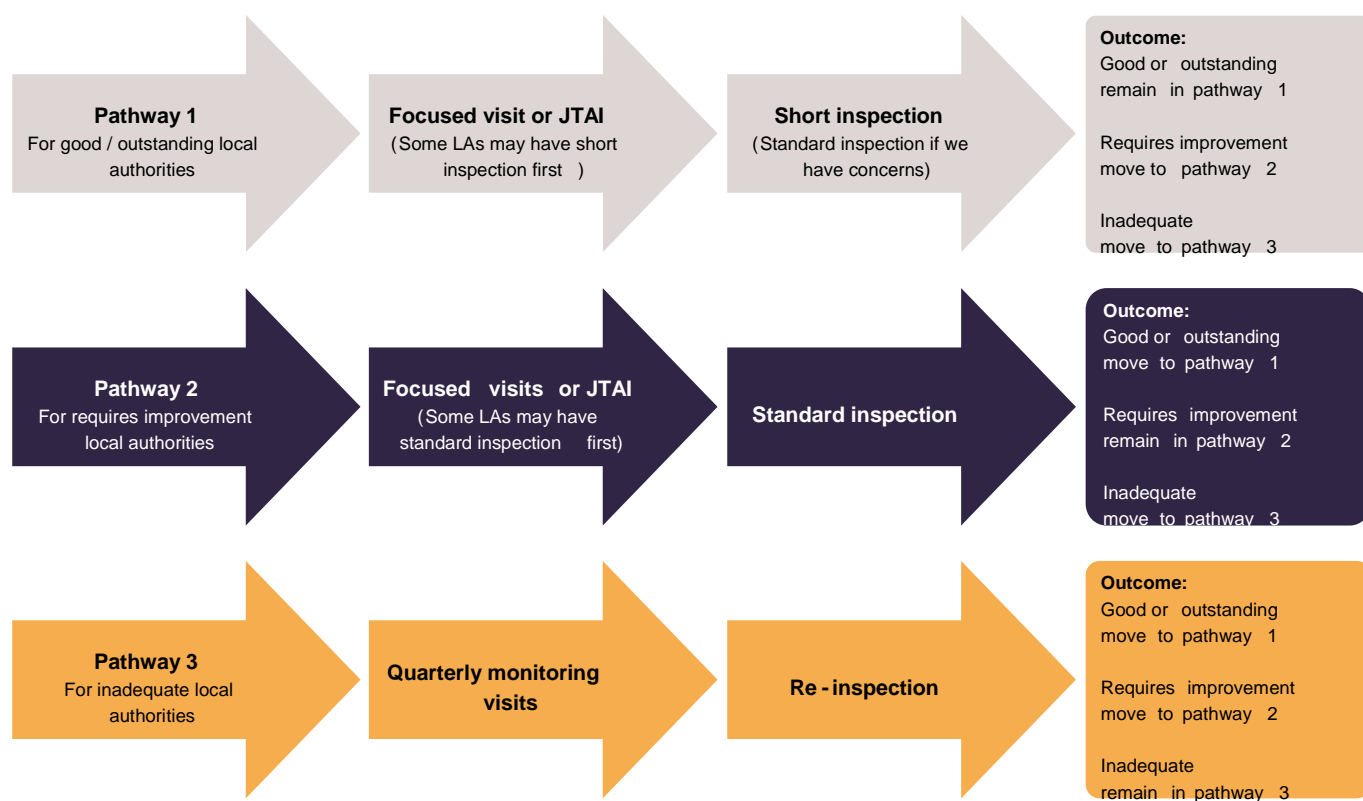
- 3.1. ILACS focuses on the effectiveness of local authority services and arrangements:
  - to help and protect children;
  - to assess the experiences and progress of children in care wherever they live, including those children who return home;
  - for permanence for children who are looked after, including adoption;
  - to assess the experiences and progress of care leavers;
  - to judge how effective leadership of the local authority is in creating an environment where social work can flourish.

The new framework is primarily focused on social work and the quality of professional practice, but will also evaluate the effectiveness of leaders and managers and the impact they have on the lives of children and young people.

- 3.2. ILACS establishes an inspection 'system', aimed at making inspection risk-based and proportionate through more frequent contact tailored to each local authority. It comprises:
- an annual engagement meeting between the local authority and an Ofsted regional representative to reflect on what is happening in the local authority and to inform future engagement.
  - standard inspections (usually for local authorities judged requires improvement to be good).
  - short inspections (for local authorities judged good or outstanding).
  - focused visits that look at a specific area of service or cohort of children
  - monitoring visits.
  - Joint Targeted Area Inspections (JTAI).

Local authorities are also encouraged to participate in activity outside inspection, such as sharing a self-evaluation for discussion at the annual engagement meeting.

- 3.3. The following diagram summarises the three inspection pathways in the ILACS framework. Brent will follow Pathway 2 based on the previous Single Inspection Framework judgement of November 2015 that the authority requires improvement to be judged good. It is likely that Brent will be inspected at some point during 2018 as standard inspections are to be carried out within six months of the three-year anniversary of the previous inspection.



- 3.4. A standard inspection team will consist of four social care inspectors, with a social care regulatory inspector on site for up to two days and a schools inspector for one day. Inspectors will be on site for two weeks, but Ofsted will spend time engaging off site with local authorities in the first week following notification on the Monday, gathering information and intelligence to inform key lines of enquiry for the two weeks on site.
- 3.5. The focus of standard inspections is social workers' direct practice with families and the impact on outcomes for children. There is an emphasis on observing practice and staff will need to be prepared for this approach. Social workers will be asked about a range of issues, including the quality and impact of supervision and management oversight, how they are helped to strengthen families and minimise risk, workloads and training and development opportunities.
- 3.6 The inspection will involve reading case files and supporting documentation (including evaluating individual children's records that have already been audited by the local authority), meeting with children, parents or carers, relevant staff and stakeholders and observing multi-agency meetings. The inspection will use case examples to test the effectiveness of Council wide and partnership working in identifying and responding to vulnerable children and families. Leadership will be judged by how well an environment is created in which social work can flourish, with planned action viewed as a strength.

### **Brent's preparation for ILACS**

- 3.7. Brent was judged as requiring improvement to be good in its last inspection. Ofsted noted that while strong and focused leadership had led to a number of important improvements in the quality of services, the local authority was not yet delivering consistently good services for children and young people. Progress since 2015 regarding the recommendations include:
- Governance arrangements have improved, with Scrutiny Committee's priorities refocused around children and young people's service priorities. The Committee has received training to ensure it provides robust challenge that contributes to service improvement.
  - A senior management reorganisation in April 2016 led by the Strategic Director, Children and Young People supported a strengthening of management accountability and the delivery of services for children through an integration of child facing services and a department wide focus on performance management and quality assurance.
  - Performance management and quality assurance mechanisms, such as the audit programme, are now better aligned. CYP has developed tools used locally to monitor performance including a monthly dashboard of key performance indicators and monthly and weekly data reports that are used by senior officers and frontline managers to drive improvements. A MASH

dashboard has been developed that supports daily tracking of cases. Senior leaders routinely review performance information and complex case studies at monthly Senior Leadership Team meetings to identify lessons learned and develop new cross-service approaches.

- A range of activities has led to improvements in the quality and consistency of children and family assessments and plans. The Quality Assurance Framework (established in April 2017) sets clear standards and expectations. A whole family approach is now embedded in assessments and action plans from the Brent Family Front Door to case closure. The Brent Children's Trust Early Help Assessment (EHA) is more consistently used across partner agencies. BFFD effectively triages referrals to determine threshold before signposting to the appropriate service with timely responses depending on urgency.
- Improvements in the quality and timeliness of assessments and child protection plans as well as revisions to reflect changing circumstances have been achieved through further embedding the Signs of Safety approach. This supports families to develop a plan with professionals, drawing on their strengths and resources. Participation in the England Innovation Programme phase 2, launched in September 2017 for two years until September 2019, is strengthening this further. Management oversight of these assessments and plans is well-established through tracking systems that assess outcomes and impact. An increased understanding at all levels of how practice needs to improve is being driven by a refreshed audit programme that is using appreciative inquiry techniques.
- To strengthen how social workers consider the culture, religion and language of children and their families and other factors that reflect the diverse nature of Brent, training on cultural competency has been delivered. This has been a focus of audit activity and is embedded in the new Practice Framework, launched in November 2017. The development of specialised FGM services evidences a shift in approach. The turnover of social worker staff, however, makes it a challenge to embed best practice in this area. This should improve once a current realignment of social care has been completed, resulting in greater stability in the workforce.
- Work to protect vulnerable adolescents has strengthened (including children and young people missing from home or education, children and young people attending alternative provision such as Brent River College, children and young people at risk of offending or gang exploitation or at risk of CSE) through a whole family multi-agency approach tailored to the family's needs. The strategic, multi-agency Vulnerable Adolescents Panel established in December 2016 is driving greater understanding of risks between CSE, missing, gangs and other vulnerabilities and is informing a partnership response to keep young people safe. Further work is planned around predictive modelling and data analysis. A daily Integrated Risk Management meeting has been established from January 2017 that

focuses on vulnerable adolescents and promotes a timely and proactive multi-agency response. Brent now has some strong practice around the understanding of gang and CSE related risk, with the MASE panel driving strong interventions and tracking of both individual situations and trends.

- Outcomes for looked after children and care leavers are improving. Personal Education Plans (PEPs) have been developed to reflect individual SMART targets. Tighter monitoring of PEP targets and targeted programmes and interventions, such as the LEXIA literacy programme, have had a positive impact on educational progress at Key Stages 1 and 2. A range of strategies are being implemented to improve attendance and engagement at KS3 and KS4 and to help children and young people overcome barriers to learning. This includes bespoke mentoring and counselling, training to schools/education provisions and close working with YOS and social workers to ensure individual histories and needs inform intervention planning. From autumn 2016, the Virtual School has been providing support to post-16 LAC to ensure that Year 11 school leavers have destination places and to support transition into FE/sixth form places.
- A new team dedicated to Care Leavers has been established from January 2017, which is supporting more robust pathway planning and progress for young people. This team is working closely with training providers and careers advice and guidance workers to increase care leaver progression into further education, apprenticeships and other vocational further education. The newly designed Local Offer will provide more opportunities and support for care leavers.

3.8. A number of challenges remain. Whilst 80% of front line social workers are now permanent, recruitment (in particular to senior social worker and first line management roles) remains a challenge. Meeting the needs of vulnerable adolescents and thereby reducing the number of late entrants into the care system and, for those who do enter, evidencing tangible improvements in their outcomes is a further challenge. The realignment of social work services, introduced from January 2018 will help the department meet both these challenges, as smaller teams have been created, with more opportunity for practice reflection supporting child-focused decision making and interventions as well as enhanced career development.

3.9. Over the next 6 to 12 months, CYP will be continuing to embed consistent good practice through;

- embedding the Practice Framework.
- completing a realignment of social work teams to secure stability of the work force and ensure that first line managers are skilled and trained to be able to challenge and support their staff.
- continuing to drive a learning culture through robust performance management and thematic audit activity, capturing both best practice and areas to improve.
- delivering the EiP2 action plan to fully embed Signs of Safety.

3.10. Brent Children and Young People department has undertaken the following actions to prepare for the new inspection system;

- building on existing departmental improvement activity, a self-evaluation is being prepared to share with Ofsted.
- regular dry runs of child level data required following notification of inspection in the offsite information gathering week, including the data analysis tool that Ofsted will use to assess performance.
- briefing CMT, PCG and Children's Trust partners on the new inspection framework.
- established an evidence library of required documents.
- drafted a logistics plan for the 3 week inspection period with supporting documents.

#### **4.0 Financial Implications**

4.1. There are no financial implications linked to the content of this report.

#### **5.0 Legal Implications**

5.1. The Local Authority has statutory duties under the Children Act 1989 and the Children Act 2004 to safeguard the welfare of children in the borough with the involvement of other statutory agencies.

#### **6.0 Equality Implications**

6.1. This report covers services for children and families in need of help and protection including looked after children and care leavers.

#### **7.0 Consultation with Ward Members and Stakeholders**

7.1 Children's Trust members have received a previous version of this report.

#### **8.0 Human Resources/Property Implications (if appropriate)**

8.1 There are no Human Resources implications for this report.

**Report sign off:**

**GAIL TOLLEY**

Strategic Director Children and Young People