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**Children's Services Improvement Board  
Chair – Stuart Smith  
Minutes of meeting held 13 May 2021**

<b>Attendees:</b>	
<b>Name</b>	<b>Job Title</b>
Amandip Johal	Head of Service - Safeguarding Reviewing and Quality Assurance
Ann Baxter	Local Government Associate
Bev Wilson	DfE Case Lead representative
Christina Holloway	Associate Director - Keeping Well (CCG)
Claire Threapleton	HR Manager, Children's Services
Darren Minton	Bradford Safeguarding Board Manager
Duncan Cooper	Public Health Consultant
Geoff Winnard	Councillor – Chair of Children's Overview and Scrutiny
Ginny Robinson	Acting Headteacher, Midland Road Nursery and Abbey Green Nursery School
Heather Lacey	Headteacher Shirley Manor Primary School
Irfan Alam	Deputy Director Social Care CBMDC
Jane Booth	Chair and Independent Scrutineer – The Bradford Partnership
Joanne Hyde	Strategic Director Corporate Resources CBMDC
Laura Copley	Senior Data Analytics & Intelligence Officer OCX
Marium Haque	Deputy Director, Education and Learning
Mark Douglas	Strategic Director Children's Services CBMDC
Michelle Holgate	General Manager Community Services, Bradford District Care NHS Foundation Trust
Michelle Turner	Strategic Director of Quality and Nursing Bradford District and Craven CCG
Phil Hayden	Director of Programmes Children's Services and Innovation and Improvement
Richard Fawcett	Interim AD Safeguarding & Reviewing, Commissioning and Provider Services
Richard Padwell	Superintendent West Yorkshire Police
Stuart Smith	Chair of the Improvement Board
Traci Taylor	Principal Social Worker
<b>In attendance</b>	
Heidi Hardy	Programme Support Officer (Minutes)
<b>Apologies</b>	
Ali-Jan Haider	Executive Lead for Bradford Districts CCG
Anne Lloyd	Head of HR
Chris Chapman	Director of Finance and IT

Craig Tupling	Vice Principal, Bradford College
Heather Wilson	Commissioner (Youth Provision)
Irfan Alam	Deputy Director Social Care
Janice Hawkes	Barnardo's VCS representative
Kersten England	Chief Executive
Maggie Smallridge	Head of Bradford & Calderdale National Probation Service
Mustansir Butt	Scrutiny and Overview Lead Officer (Corporate Resources)
Patrick Scott	Chief Operating Officer and Deputy Chief Exec Bradford District Care NHS Foundation Trust. (Michelle Holgate sub)
Peter Horner	Young Lives Bradford Manager VCS representative
Philippa Hubbard	Interim Chief Operating Officer & Director of Nursing Professions and Care Standards / DIPC (Michelle Holgate sub)
Susan Hinchcliffe	Councillor and Leader of the Council
Tehmina Hashmi	Executive Principal, Bradford Academy

<b>Ref.</b>	<b>Notes / Action / Decision</b>	<b>Action Owner</b>
<b>1.</b>	<b>Welcome and apologies</b> Introductions were made. See above list of apologies.	
<b>2.</b>	<b>Minutes of last meeting held 4 March 2021 and matters arising</b> The minutes were agreed as an accurate record.	
<b>2.1</b>	<b>Matters arising</b> The roll out of new IT devices is being picked up in the Improvement Plan. Ofsted, audit data and partnership data will be covered in today's meeting. The tracking of the various areas in terms of LAC initial health assessments and health visiting etc are all reported into today's meeting. Cllr W had raised a question about the CQC report and providers. MT clarified that the CQC routinely does inspections of all providers and services and leadership of which children's will be a part – this is different to what was asked in the minutes. MT confirmed that the CLA review is routinely reported on and there would be an update on outcomes at a future Board.	
<b>3.</b>	<b>Action Tracker</b> The action tracker was updated accordingly.	
<b>4.</b>	<b>Staff Reference Group update – Traci Taylor</b> TT gave an update on the key achievements of the group.	

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	<p>This group is now embedded and meets every 3 weeks. There is good representation and information is being shared from the meetings across the service. Every meeting has a senior head of service who talks about new initiatives.</p> <p>In terms of workforce recruitment is still an issue but staff are re-assured by what is in place to address the issue e.g. additional project teams and the recruitment campaign.</p> <p>The group have embarked on practice focus months and a practice and learning campaign to increase quality of practice. Training can be accessed by other services not just SW's.</p> <p>The "Pass it on" campaign is working well and staff are sent key information on a regular basis.</p> <p>Here are set team meeting agendas comprising of business then practice agendas which are minuted, tracked and monitored. Staff welfare is now a regular agenda item on the agenda.</p> <p>There are a few concerns which staff raised; IT issues are still not fully resolved, appraisals are not always routinely undertaken which staff felt was really important to help them feel valued. TT assured that a review of the appraisal process is being undertaken. Caseloads have reduced due to project teams and additional permanent staff however this is not consistent across localities and staff turnover remains a challenge. It is recognised that churn is around agency people who leave then come back is impacting on children and young people.</p> <p>On a positive note a staff celebration event will take place virtually next week.</p> <p>Staff have worked with Claire Threapleton around recruitment campaign and branding.</p> <p>TT led virtual training with staff some of which were still using their phones and some staff still are not Teams enabled however IT are working through the cases which should be resolved very soon. Staff are strongly encouraged to book for any upgrades quickly in order to resolve Teams issues.</p> <p>The chair asked TT for a report on staff views on training at future board meetings.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> TT to include update on training at the next board.</p>	<p>TT</p>

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5.	<p><b>Directors update – Mark Douglas</b></p> <p><i>Investment</i> MD drew attention to the spreadsheet which was circulated to this board which shows the considerable investment made by the Council into Children's Services in terms of getting the establishment right. In turn, this will mean the quality of social work practice will now be improved as the Council grows its own level 3 social workers. A deep dive was undertaken by CT which looked at demand and growth demographically and what has been caused by Covid. This will be fit for purpose going forward and will be an annual process to get a baseline.</p> <p><i>Ofsted monitoring visit update</i> A further on-site monitoring visit took place on 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> April 2021 with full ILACS to resume later this year. The senior HMI Jan Edwards looked at help and protection, CIN and children subject to private fostering arrangements. The SEF and understanding was found to be accurate. A number of positives were found; change to resources and practice and all arrangements to drive quality of practice. QA processes and audit were well embedded, senior leaders have clear line of sight and assessments were found to be improving. They also found clear traction and movement in terms of quality. There is impact of movement in teams in particular commissioning teams and level 3 social workers who are clearly getting a grip of the work and putting in traction into children's plans. Variability and drift remain an issue however this is partly due to upskilling staff. The voice of the child is now in assessment and plans however this could be strengthened to show how plans drive forward showing the lived experience.</p> <p>Private fostering had some challenge and work is taking place in this area of improvement work. There will also be an annual report.</p> <p>Caseloads are still high in some parts but additional resource is having an impact.</p> <p>Stability of level 3 social workers post 2 year qualified social workers still having an impact on stability. Changes in social workers result in the need to build new relationships with families which results in some delay. Recruitment for level 3 social workers is underway. There are almost 50 level 2 staff in the system who the service will work with to progress to get to level 3. JH pointed out that the workforce is stable apart from Level 3's now.</p> <p>The draft letter was received last Friday and will be submitted to Ofsted by next Friday afternoon. The final letter will be published 4<sup>th</sup> June 2021.</p> <p>Cllr W mentioned that nothing from the visit was not expected which is positive. MD agreed however he felt that some areas of the letter would need amending for points of accuracy. There is nothing in the report which require any</p>	

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	<p>changes to the improvement plan however there is a need to continue to drive improvement and pace despite challenges.</p> <p>MD asked the board to be sighted on possible local multi-agency SEND inspection which is due later this spring.</p>	
6.	<p><b>Health system update – Michelle Turner, Michelle Holgate</b></p> <p>A new clinical model has been implemented with 4 out of 5 specialist GPs recruited to.</p> <p>MH confirmed there are currently 115 children waiting an IHA. The first multi-disciplinary team meeting took place recently which was a very positive meeting. It is anticipated with the clinics commencing 24th May that more capacity in September/October this year and this would enable the of backlog of review and initial health assessments to be reduced.</p> <p>It is noted that obtaining and sharing of consents by social care is still an issue which needs a solution. Challenges around obtaining the correct parental consent and ensuring this is provided to Health colleagues promptly. RF explained that they are working hard to address this.</p> <p><b>CPP and mental health MT</b></p> <p>MT drew attention to the accompanying the highlight report. MT explained the hard work undertaken by Alex Church, Sasha Bhat and Phil Hayden to try and put things in place within NICE guidance but specifically around changes in mental health. CAMHS waiting times are coming down as per the dashboard. Neurodiversity figures (autism) are now separated out. In terms of the pace of help, the One Trusted Pathway workshop was postponed due to apologies from LA colleagues (social care, early help and commissioning). A new date for the workshop is being planned and engagement/coproduction work taking place with children, young people, families and frontline staff. In the meantime, KB stressed that it is vital all partners in the workshop agree a mobilisation plan as part of a partnership approach. MD stressed it not just progress with waiting times but also demonstrating improved outcomes. MT felt it was important to know what families are telling us in terms of case studies and complaints.</p> <p><b>Autism</b></p> <p>A workshop for all age autism took place end April and a further one will be held to look at the whole pathway for CYP including DfE and will be led by Professor Mark Mon-Williams. It is acknowledged that progress is slow and 1344 children are waiting to be assessed. AJH has met with trusts to prioritise the waiting list commitment.</p>	

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	<p><b>0-19</b></p> <p>DC gave an update on School Nursing. The board recognised there is increasing work and demands on school nursing service and shortage of school nurses across the country. Locally, this has resulted in school nursing service within BDCFT being restructured to develop a specialist team of practitioners that will support the increasing number of strategy meeting requests and sharing of information, whilst developing a more sustainable approach. Recruitment has started in May. It is hoped that this will boost morale in service and funding has been provided by Bradford District Care Trust for 12 months.</p> <p>A review of the service against other models is taking place - the recommendations will be reported back to this board in September.</p> <p>JB recognised the offer of a short term resource but is concerned at the impact on children in school where posts have been vacant for a long time. The Bradford Partnership is concerned that current arrangements do not allow any time for preventative or early help contribution from school nursing.</p> <p>HL pointed out there is increasing demand in schools especially in Bradford South schools. Mental health issues are starting to affect younger children more and transition will be an issue.</p> <p>The chair asked Public Health to provide a progress update with the review and the approach to strategy meetings during the year. (September meeting)</p> <p><b>Actions:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It was agreed Public Health will provide a general overview of the review progress and also report on the approach to attendance at strategy meetings as an interim arrangement. To be reported to the September Improvement Board.</li> <li>2. DC to provide progress update on school nursing at future boards as part of the health system item. MT to pick up with Sarah Muckle.</li> </ol> <p><b>SEND</b></p> <p>Inspection due and no date has been announced (1 weeks' notice provided routinely). Risks need to go to the Partnership to ensure readiness for SEND. DC concerned around big set of safeguarding issues. One Trusted Pathway and the pending workshop, will support a look at this and Alex and Sasha will report on this in the future.</p> <p>The Chair drew the board's attention to the additional Health system data in the Vital Signs report and thanked health colleagues for their contributions.</p>	<p>DC</p> <p>DC / MT</p>

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7.	<p><b>Improvement update – Richard Fawcett/Phil Hayden</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Improvement Plan May update was agreed by the board.</li> <li>• RF took the board through the key points from the improvement update report.</li> <li>• Appointed dedicated professional recruiter to kick start with expertise Level 3 Social workers.</li> <li>• Caseloads are now reducing as a result of the social work fixed term teams.</li> <li>• CT announced that a deep dive will take place on observations, what is working well, quick wins and other things to consider. Amandip to look at further training at the away day on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2021.</li> <li>• In process of appointing additional worker to focus on writing adoption cases.</li> <li>• Significant progress made around the response to domestic violence.</li> <li>• Pause Project pause is now mobilised and is working with women who have lost their children to care service.</li> <li>• RF was pleased to report Newholme Children's Home elevated to a Good rating by Ofsted at its recent inspection. 9 of our homes good our outstanding. 2 remain RI and intensive work is underway to make the required improvements.</li> <li>• The Fostering Service is being revamped digitally including new website which was launched this week along with marketing materials.</li> <li>• In process of registering LA-owned bungalow (The Bungalow) with Ofsted as a 2-bedroom home for complex children thus reducing the need for high cost out of area placements.</li> <li>• Life Story Work completed for more than 100 children via contract with Innovate.</li> <li>• Practice model launched.</li> <li>• Recruited to last 2 IRO posts.</li> </ul> <p>Cllr W queried how mandatory training fitted into individual training plans of individual social workers. RW assured all training was picked up through the appraisal supervision.</p> <p>TT assured Cllr W that appraisals and supervisions were highlighted at managers meetings to ensure they are being carried out and in addition PSW's spend 2 hours doing reflective discussions that month in terms of that mandatory training and there are now 4 trainers and a Learning and Development Manager is due to start at the end of June which has made a huge difference in the L&amp;D and training offer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial/Management Controls. A lot of work has been done around financial management and controls so people are very clear in terms of spend and rolling out new budget management meetings.</li> </ul>	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DMT have signed off VFM and efficiencies plan, agency spend and placements which are monitored on a quarterly basis to MD through a workshop approach.</li> <li>• Purchasing cards have been rolled out improving efficiency.</li> </ul> <p>There are some key actions and areas of concern on the improvement plan which will need pace and others which will be resolved by end of May.</p> <p>The Chair queried the time taken for the Business Support function review. CT assured the Chair that the structure had just been finalised and will offer career progression opportunities for staff. Work is underway on the new roles which will go to grading. The new structure will provide everyone who works in a line manager in a support function.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> CT to provide update on the Business Support review at next meeting.</p>	<p><b>CT</b></p>
<p><b>8.</b></p>	<p><b>Vital Signs (March data) - Laura Copley</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CIC numbers have has reduced. Face to face visits have increased impacting on timeliness.</li> <li>• Single assessments timeliness dropped. Demand in March / April high impacting on figures.</li> <li>• Caseloads reducing since introduction of new teams. Some less than 16 cases and 16-25 band starting to grow.</li> <li>• The number of staff with over 25 cases has now reduced to approximately 20% form 30%</li> <li>• Dental checks have increased to 50%. 65% at this morning. Carers are taking children for private dental checks where they cannot get an NHS appointment.</li> <li>• Staff Leavers are reducing.</li> <li>• Work to do around reasons for resignations.</li> <li>• Male workers increasing.</li> <li>• It is noted that access to kit and IT equipment and challenges staff have is an issue for some of these leavers.</li> </ul> <p>Cllr W asked reasons why any member of staff have resigned. TT assured that her team were working with IT, payroll and workforce colleagues so that when a member of staff is notified as a leaver, the system generates an automatic email which is reported to TT as Principal Social Worker.</p> <p>Sickness continues to reduce in localities following changes put in place and mental health worked-related absence is now at the same level as non-work related stress.</p>	



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	<p>The chair noted that a number of the timeliness indicators had deteriorated significantly since the March/April spike in demand. This was particularly the case for ICPC with 15 days of the strategy meeting. RF felt that this and other indicators will recover as the impact of children returning to school reduces.</p> <p>HL conscious that the pressures due to Covid were impacting on assessments not taking place in time resulting in delay in court. Same with PLOs as well. MD assured that this was being addressed and indicators show they are recovering following the spike in April. It is noted that high referrals still coming in through Front Door however to address this, additional resources are being put in where needed.</p> <p>JB assured work was going on to strengthen the connectivity from strategy discussions and late notifications coming in on CP and work was underway to reduce this. With regard to the Front Door, auditing is taking place and Nabeel's report shows he now satisfied what is coming in was appropriate and there was absolute assurance no children are left who are not immediately risk assessed in terms of risk of harm assessments.</p> <p>RP assured by information on DV and ability to refer through Early Help. RP made clear that in terms of capacity for conferences the Police will prioritise and avoid delay where safeguarding issues are at the fore.</p> <p>MD agreed a robust system will manage peaks in demand and arrangements at front door are much improved.</p> <p>MT stressed the need work together as one system as partners to discharge its workforce collectively and by cracking Early Help this would free up processions to do what they need to do.</p> <p>The Chair pointed out that great efforts to get children seen have been observed however it is noted that the spike in March was higher than other areas.</p> <p>The next highlight report to list reasons as to what is being around referrals. AJ will look at re-referrals on a regular basis throughout the year.</p>	
9.	<p><b>Audit report (February /March data)– Amandip Johal</b></p> <p>Compliance remains steady. Focus on return rate now caseloads are reduced they will be able to return their audits.</p> <p>Participation now at 72% and moderation and grading is consistent applying same thresholds in their work. Need to focus on actions are embedded and closing loop on learning.</p>	

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	<p>Learning themes are set out in report. Looked at setting out actions and linked to Improvement work. Making sure learning is being taken through training or changing processes. All audit reports now go to team meetings for information.</p> <p>Audit return rate is not as good as it can be and changes in workforce have impacted however new stability should start to show a trajectory soon. The chair noted specifically that the return of audits from the practice supervisor group was as low as 50% - this is a key aspect of their role to drive quality of practice.</p> <p>A calendar of thematic audits will focus on specific areas in addition to the standard case file audits to drive improvement.</p> <p><b>Action:</b> AJ and TT to prioritise the urgent need to complete effective audits.</p>	<p><b>AJ/TT</b></p>
<p><b>10.</b></p>	<p><b>The Bradford Partnership (TBP) update</b></p> <p>JB gave an update on The Bradford Safeguarding Partnership's Covid meetings which are still taking place on a weekly basis – TBP are now reviewing the frequency on these meetings given the improvements around Covid.</p> <p>An overview of the partnerships response was given to the 3 ministerial letters in respect of serious violence and exploitation. The partnership responded well and provided a detailed response to the letter, despite the tight timescales.</p> <p>The TBP participated in serious violence summit along with 30 other LA's hosted by the three ministerial depts.; the DfE, Home Office and Dept of Health &amp; Social Care. Further summits are planned for later in the year.</p> <p>Harmful Sexual Behaviour training is being rolled out and there has been a significant uptake on the numbers of staff participating.</p> <p>TBP are dealing with a number of practice reviews being commenced outside Bradford which involve families and children who have previously resided in Bradford.</p> <p>CSE Thematic likely to published at the end of June 2.</p>	
<p><b>11.</b></p>	<p><b>Any Other Business</b></p> <p>HL thanked the heads of service for their support and guidance around issues with social care or Early Help on behalf of all headteachers. A particular thank you was given to Phillipa Holmes Head of Service Bradford East. Meetings were quickly set up to address any concerns or a phone call to give insight into</p>	

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	what is happening behind the scenes. Whilst this doesn't always stop the frustrations from either side it helps develop an understanding about what is going on.	