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**Children's Services Improvement Board
Chair – Stuart Smith
Minutes of meeting held 4 March 2021**

Attendees:	
Name	Job Title
Adrian Farley	Councillor - Lead Portfolio Holder Children and Families
Ali-Jan Haider	Executive Lead for Bradford Districts CCG
Amandip Johal	Head of Service - Safeguarding Reviewing and Quality Assurance
Ann Baxter	Local Government Associate
Bev Wilson	DfE Case Lead representative
Brigid Baker	Bradford College representative
Chris Chapman	Director of Finance and IT
Claire Threapleton	HR Manager, Children's Services (sub Anne Lloyd)
Darren Minton	Bradford Safeguarding Board Manager
Geoff Winnard	Councillor – Chair of Children's Overview and Scrutiny
Heather Lacey	Headteacher Shirley Manor Primary School
Irfan Alam	Deputy Director Social Care CBMDC
Jane Booth	Chair and Independent Scrutineer – The Bradford Partnership
Janice Hawkes	Barnardos VCS representative
Joanne Hyde	Strategic Director Corporate Resources CBMDC
Kersten England	Chief Executive
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 (nee Smith)	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
Susan Hinchcliffe	Councillor and Leader of the Council
Traci Taylor	Principal Social Worker
In attendance	
Heidi Hardy	Programme Support Officer (Minutes)
Apologies	
Anne Lloyd	Head of HR – (sub Claire Threapleton)
Craig Tupling	Vice Principal, Bradford College (sub Brigid Baker)
Ginny Robinson	Acting Headteacher, Midland Road Nursery and Abbey Green Nursery School
Heather Wilson	Commissioner (Youth Provision)
Jo Newman	Named Nurse for Safeguarding Children / Airedale NHS Foundation Trust

	(sub for Jill Asbury)
Jo Newman	Airedale ANHSFT (sub for Jill Asbury)
Karen Dawber	Chief Nurse BRI
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
Phil Witcherley	Head of Performance
Philippa Hubbard	Interim Chief Operating Officer & Director of Nursing Professions and Care Standards / DIPC
Shanaz Akhter	Staff Reference Group representative
Tehmina Hashmi	Executive Principal, Bradford Academy

Ref.	Notes / Action / Decision	Action Owner
1.	<p>Welcome and apologies</p> <p>Introductions were made. See above list of apologies.</p>	
2.	<p>Minutes of last meeting held 21 January 2021 and matters arising</p> <p>The minutes were agreed as an accurate record. There were no matters arising.</p> <p>2.1 Matters arising</p> <p><i>ICT</i> An update included within item 6.</p> <p><i>Mockingbird model</i> Richard Fawcett confirmed that the model was launched virtually yesterday. The Chair expressed his delight at the effort gone towards launching the model in these difficult times.</p>	
3.	<p>Action Tracker</p> <p>The action tracker was updated accordingly. There were no actions outstanding.</p>	
4.	<p>Staff Reference Group</p> <p>Traci Taylor presented feedback from the group.</p> <p>It was found that the group is now gathering momentum but needed to highlight the challenges more. Amandip Johal has attended the group and each week a different leader attends. An open invitation now goes out staff including agency workers. Information is now shared consistency across the workforce. Staff do feel they are listened to in terms of realignment of localities and there is a lot better communication across the whole of the service in the form of the "Pass it On" campaign whereby key</p>	

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	<p>actions from management are cascaded to staff. Staff engagement sessions held on a regular basis, are well attended and there is now a set agenda for every meeting. Meetings are minuted effectively and dip sampled. It was noted that there is a lot of new learning and changes for staff to be taken on board which will take some time. High caseloads are an issue however staff are aware of management's strategy to address this. Workforce issues around IT are also being addressed which is welcomed by the group.</p> <p>Cllr Farley thanked Traci for the helpful update. He confirmed that he meets with Social Workers on an ad-hoc basis to triangulate what is heard and it is noted that in relation to concerns about caseloads and how this is being addressed is understood by staff.</p> <p>Cllr Hinchcliffe asked what progress was being made with staff getting the right IT equipment. Mark Douglas assured that significant progress has been made around IT and several thousand devices have now been rolled out and as staff leave equipment is now being returned and new equipment issued along the way. The significant programme roll-out of Windows 10 and Microsoft Teams is underway with 1500 licences rolled out which will increase in the coming weeks.</p> <p>Joanne Hyde explained that over 1000 upgraded new devices and tablets have been issued since March and that Children's Services have been prioritised over all other services in council. Office 365 migration is now 99.9% completed and Microsoft Teams is now available through tablets and other devices. Staff can self-service and book an upgrade by invitation for their "thin client" devices. It was noted that some agency staff have still got some equipment but the majority of front line staff now have access to IT systems.</p> <p>Mark Douglas agreed it was recognised that in some parts of the system there is challenge around caseloads. Mark assured that in terms of demand that Executive have approved resource which has been put in place which should see caseloads should come down to a more manageable figure and will ensure staff are supported. Irfan explained that the caseload report was monitored weekly.</p> <p>Cllr Winnard asked whether the group intended to look at health and wellbeing support for the workforce. Traci Taylor confirmed that mindfulness sessions were available for staff and that she would also add health and wellbeing support as an agenda item to the next staff reference group agenda.</p> <p>Heather Lacey queried how the increase in demand and its impact on schools would be supported. Mark Douglas agreed the level of demand and referrals whilst this remains high, resources and capacity will be put in to manage this increase in demand where necessary. Step down panels also increased and mitigations are in place to ensure safe step-down of cases.</p> <p>Joanne Hyde supported Mark and Irfan in terms of Executive's Covid financial response to children's services in terms of recruitment.</p> <p>Kersten England asked the Chair it would be worth circulating a summary of all additional investment in this year's budget which is to support vulnerable children and families. Not all in social care capacity but focussed on alleviating hardship (food fuel</p>	

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	<p>digital connectivity) and education catch up support. All part of wider prevention and early help.</p> <p>Action: The Chair agreed Mark Douglas to circulate a summary of all additional investment in this year's budget which is to support vulnerable children and families. The summary to show budget growth for 21/22 both one off and permanent growth and will be included as part of the Director's report to the next board.</p> <p>Cllr Hinchcliffe pointed out regarding the localities point that the Executive have now also invested more in neighbourhood ward officers, doubling the capacity in localities. This will enable neighbourhoods to work as local brokers connecting Children's with neighbourhood services with police and housing etc.</p> <p>Action: Traci Taylor to add health and wellbeing support as an agenda item for the next meeting of the Staff Reference Group.</p> <p>Stuart Smith will attend the Staff Reference Group on 15th March.</p>	<p>Mark Douglas</p> <p>Traci Taylor</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>Directors update – Mark Douglas</p> <p><i>Ofsted Assurance Visit</i></p> <p>Mark confirmed the findings letter was published 12th February 2021. All of the processes around the activity was in the form of a mini ILACS including an Annexe A. The letter recognises the very challenging context Bradford faces in terms of Covid – high levels of infection and demand on the system. The letter was balanced in terms of strengths. Recognises senior management team not in place until March 2020 referenced to the Heads of Service posts.</p> <p>Leaders have a good understanding of areas for improvement and that our assessment was right. Practice standards in place to address improvement. Leaders developed better management grip of case files and quality. The letter recognised that Bradford were reviewing its IT progress and had recruited to specialist posts during Covid.</p> <p>Managers are now starting to challenge weak practice and focus is on the right issues. There is good strategic support and investment including additional Covid funding providing additional capacity.</p> <p>Partnerships are a strength and continue to meet weekly and partners continue to discharge their responsibilities.</p> <p>Some challenges include stability of workforce in particular the challenge of recruitment of Level 3 Social Workers to drive the pace of improvement. Recruitment in other areas has been successful however.</p> <p>The timeliness of health interventions especially CAHMS was noted.</p> <p>Variability of practice remains a challenge but is the focus of the next stage of the improvement work will be in challenging the quality of practice.</p> <p>Kersten questioned; although there was challenge on serious incident notifications</p>	

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	<p>and increased levels of harm for under 2's for which the review was closed off, she asked where Bradford was at with "growing our own social workers" in terms of Level 3's. Mark assured that agency levels were now decreasing to a national level at around 1 in 4 and that a process to retrospectively review serious incident notifications was in place.</p> <p>In terms of under 2's Mark asked Irfan's team to do an audit of all of these cases. It was found that in every case a satisfied response was provided. It would found that 1 or 2 cases did require further investigation which was satisfied in the response by Ofsted. Mark assured that specialist agency teams were being brought in to address current pressure. 30 of Bradford's own staff will shortly go through panel process to Level 3 which will provide the additional capacity at this level.</p> <p>Cllr Farley asked what the impact of the additional teams had been made. Mark explained that the first impacts will be known within 3-4 weeks by which caseloads should start to reduce.</p> <p>Claire Threapleton thanked the Executive for their support to move on the additional teams in terms of demand and now schools are returning we are mobilising sooner than others. The Teams are up and running and cases are capped at 20 including most complex PLO cases. A review of cases will take place and measures from visits will be available. The Covid recovery team has started in East and further teams will be in place from middle of March.</p> <p>It was noted that because of pressure in the system PSW's carry additional caseloads but now this is being migrated away from them they the PSW can work with AYSE's.</p> <p>The Chair looked forward to seeing the impact that the additional teams have on caseloads and outcomes/throughput for children within future highlight reports.</p> <p><i>DFE stocktake visit</i></p> <p>A session of the Staff Reference group took place recently during which staff voiced their concerns. Some of what they shared reflects what was said today in terms of caseloads however they are sighted on what managers are doing to alleviate this. Further sessions will take place next week. The DfE set 4 topic areas to be covered during the process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment and Retention – work to get fully costed structure based on caseloads of 24. Regarding of roles, safeguarding unit now almost fully permanently staffed. • Quality of practice. Compliance and oversight. Support for staff during and after Covid. • IT equipment for the workforce • Partnership Working – health performance, thresholds and demands on the Front Door. 	
6.	<p>Improvement Update and updated plan</p> <p>Irfan, Richard and Phil presented the latest updates from the Improvement Plan. There was an update on the fixed term teams, new staffing arrangements and the recruitment campaign. There was also an update on the focussed training and</p>	

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	<p>development in core practice and the review of private fostering.</p> <p>Areas causing a concern include Autism waiting lists, increased contacts at the Integrated front door and it was noted there was an increase in staff sickness as a result of Covid 19 symptoms and testing positive. The next update will include an update on the impact of performance management.</p> <p>Action: It was agreed that future highlight reports will include impact of the recruitment campaign on the 160 proposed staffing growth showing trajectory for each of the 7 categories of staff listed on slide 11. Claire Threapleton to provide Laura Copley with data for Vital Signs report.</p>	<p>Laura Copley/ Claire Threapleton</p>
7.	<p>Vital Signs – December data</p> <p>Laura Copley focussed on key areas from the report including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dental checks now have to be funded by the service. • Michelle Turner confirmed that the IHA backlog is now 100 not 209 • Irfan explained that the reporting in this Vital Signs report was taken from December and that substantial improvement had been made since then of which the impact will be seen by February March reports. <p>The chair thanked everyone in Health system for addressing the issues of concern.</p> <p>Jane booth explained that the weekly data from the Partnership Board shows much more detailed performance graphics in terms of Integrated Front Door contacts NFA.</p> <p>It was noted that timeliness is really good with a more challenging target of every two weeks at 70%.</p> <p>Sickness is seen to be impacting especially at the Integrated Front Door.</p> <p>The Chair felt assured that it was now clear that NFAs were coming through on consent now.</p>	
8.	<p>Audit – October data</p> <p>The report showed that compliance has improved overall and that it was largely related to sickness and the service is now getting back good detail and evidence to support learning for social workers. There is an understanding of the Practice Standards across the boards to get consistency and audit is now being picked up in timely way.</p> <p>In terms of strengths and learning there are pockets of good and outstanding practice but challenge remains to get consistency that sits alongside compliance. There is good evidence at the Integrated Front Door which is triangulated across forums. There is quality of recording the voice of the child and the lived experience. Learning has also been fed into focussed approach around practice. The Audit report now goes in draft to Children's Services Management team where reflection takes place on</p>	

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	<p>strengths and learning and an action plan is in place around this area.</p> <p>Amandip reported there are conversations and follow up conversations around grading and audit outcomes and successful factors in understanding of expectations.</p> <p>It was noted by the Board that staff went to additional lengths during Covid to ensure contact visits for families particularly over the Christmas period which was greatly appreciated during the pandemic.</p>	
<p>9.</p>	<p>The Bradford Partnership update</p> <p>Jane Booth went through key highlights from her report which was for information to the board which included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groups have been running since September and membership and capacity for the sub-group continues. • Multi agency training not taking place face to face however there will be an on-line course taking place in April. Staff do continue to use the Virtual College for training. • Health and sexual health training to be rolled out. • Exploitation of children work formalised and an all age group agenda is being developed working along Adults. • The Exploitation Conference took place on 12 February 2021. Jane thanked the Police for their contribution • Big thematic case review is on track and will go to a future Partnership Board and will be published late May taking forward learning and plans. • Two other serious case reviews being worked on but still await publication dates. • Since this report there has been a communication from the Home Office and Health and Social Care around knife crime where Bradford has been picked up. Darren Minton is working with a task and finish group around this area of focus and will report back to this board on recommendations from the report. 	
<p>10.</p>	<p>Progress on Health Improvement – Michelle Turner</p> <p>Michelle presented a detailed highlight report that demonstrated the progress made by health colleagues (BDCT, BTHFT, ANHSFT, public health and the CCG) and around some key areas of concern and the health system improvements in relation to Children looked after, Childrens Autism, children waiting on the CAMHS acute pathway. This has been led by a task and finish group for the health system with oversight from the System Quality Committee which is currently chaired by Michelle.</p> <p>A paper was being put together by Ali-Jan Haider which addresses the local challenges in relation to children's autism and this will be considered by the CCGs governing body in March 2021.</p> <p>Michelle and Irfan Alam undertook a joint review of the current arrangements for complex children (BMDC and CCG joint placement panel). There were no current disputes, oversight will continue as part of the work with the SQC re further improvements required.</p>	

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	<p>Michelle proposed to bring a highlight and trajectory report for this meeting which the chair and Cllr Farley welcomed.</p> <p>Cllr Farley – thanked Michelle and her colleagues for the meeting around health system issues last Tuesday and welcomed that the system was working towards one aim.</p> <p>Jane Booth also welcomed the report and confirmed that the Partnership Monitoring Board would build this into their system.</p> <p>Cllr Winnard asked what the funding would achieve in terms of impact on waiting lists and if the CQC were now involved? Michelle explained that the CQC carry out reviews not inspections with Health in relation to children looked after (CLAS review) and they also carry out inspections of providers</p> <p>Ali-Jan explained the need to have more focus on number of case there are per year in line with the funding and outsourcing of cases and prioritisation of non-recurrent funding to tackle waiting lists and number of referrals received each year. Patient tracking lists are looking at children in the system and there is work in localities taking place around Prevention and Early Help. Cllr Winnard asked to see the impact of this.</p> <p>Action: The Chair welcomed a future report from Michelle to cover the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcomes of CQC inspections of health providers • Outsourcing of cases and prioritisation of waiting lists and the impact of Prevention and Early Help (including contribution from Public Health – Health Visitors and Nurses and Early Help capacity role) • The impacts of timeliness and impacts on how it makes a difference for children. <p>Heather Lacey welcomed the approach around getting people into her school remotely and strategically in school and also welcomed this way forward in terms of assessments.</p> <p>Mark Douglas agreed progress had been made but stressed the need to see the impact in timeliness and impacts on how it makes a difference for children and the need to identify where immediate response is.</p> <p>Progress on Children's Mental Health - Sasha Bhat</p> <p>Sasha gave a presentation on the progress made to date as part of the Act as One transformation programme aligned with children in mind and system review.</p> <p>Sasha reported of the 29 actions to address issues in terms of issue raised in the Ofsted report there was one action listed red as at March 2021 and good progress is being made in all other areas of work and in terms of actions to move all others to green by June 202.</p> <p>System review and leadership is still a key challenge and investment is needed to address this. Prevention is also a key part of this work.</p>	<p>Michelle Turner</p>

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	<p>Going forward the Vital Signs report will include report on the data on mental health for children and will include work on transitions and mental health resilience. It was agreed that the Vital Signs report will in future include trajectory data and information relating to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children Looked After initial and review health assessments to include routine work and addressing the backlog. • CAMHS and ADS- capacity and addressing the backlog, assessment and treatment • The review of 0-19 provision and the role and capacity of school nurses and health visitors • EHC plan performance 	
11.	<p>Children's Homes update</p> <p>Richard Fawcett was pleased to report that 8 homes are rated Good our Outstanding. There has been a real challenge through Covid either through staff being ill or through isolating Track and Trace. Richard reported that with sadness a member of staff passed away due to Covid.</p> <p>No place was disputed through Covid and stability was maintained for the District's most complex children. Richard praised Public Health for their support through this period, no unplanned exits were reported during the pandemic and stability remains high.</p> <p>An action plan does remain in place for one home following a compliance notice issued by Ofsted.</p> <p><i>Regulation 44 update</i> Visits have continued during the pandemic.</p> <p>In terms of unregulated provision for 16 and 17 year olds a parallel process similar to regulation 44 will be put in place and will ensure quality of provision from providers.</p>	
12.	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>None</p>	