

Report of Children's Trust Board Event

5th March 2015

This paper sets out the main points of discussion and views from participants in the conference session held by the Children's Trust Board on the Thursday 5th March 2015. The main aim of the session was to provide an opportunity for key stakeholders, children and young people to come together to discuss and share their priorities to inform the future delivery of the wide range of services provided by partner organisations of the Children's Trust Board.

Representatives from a range of organisations attended an initial session (session one) designed for partners responsible for commissioning and delivering services to children and young people. The afternoon was then joined by around 20 young people who participated in a session (session two) led by the council's participation officer. The afternoon ended with an opportunity for the young people to put questions to a panel of key experts, chaired by the Chairman of the council's Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee (session three).

The feedback from the session will be considered by the Children's Trust Board to inform its review of future priorities for the partnership.

Session One

1. Progress in delivering Barnet's Children and Young People Plan

In the first part of the afternoon key partners presented progress by their organisation or service in delivering the priorities and ambitions of Barnet Children and Young People Plan.

Presentations were made by

- Nicola Francis, Family Services Director, Barnet Council
- Ian Harrison, Education and Skills Director, Barnet Council
- Judy Mace, Head of Children's Joint Commissioning, Barnet CCG
- Jeff Lake, Consultant in Public Health, Barnet and Harrow

The power point presentations are attached to this report.

2. Priorities going forward

The session was then organised into two groups with each group invited to consider themes for children and young people in relation to education, preparing for adulthood, health and wellbeing and keeping safe

Feedback from group discussions included:

a) Health and Well-Being / Keeping Young People Safe

A key area of discussion was child sexual exploitation (CSE). The group recognised CSE as an increasingly important challenge which requires close partnership working offering a multidisciplinary response from the local authority statutory services, police, schools, voluntary sector and health. It was felt that this should be prioritised within the work of the CTB, as although the rate of CSE in the borough is lower than in other areas, it is increasing.

The group discussed services for young people aged 12+ in the borough, identifying a number of areas for improvement. While best practice is well known, it was felt that more needs to be done to work with young people to establish what this group needs and wants, as the offer for this age group is different than for children and older adolescents. In particular, support for the transition from primary to secondary school was also raised as an important issue, involving a range of different services for children across school years 5-7. The need for a multidisciplinary offer around school exclusion was also raised, involving working with PRUs, using CAFs and EHCPs and working with teachers to identify and work with pupils at risk of exclusion early.

Reviewing capacity pressures and adapting services around these was seen as important. It was felt that we should be asking what service offer families want and need. An example was given of changes made to breast cancer services to reduce the number of patients who were open cases for check-ups. Patients were asked what offer they would be happy with and were happy to be discharged provided they could be seen within 48 hours, resulting in increased capacity for diagnosis.

It was suggested a similar approach could be taken for areas of children's services, including troubled families. Links were made to the 0-25 service offer, giving families and carers confidence in the system that a service is there for them for this period.

The group discussed the early intervention referral offer, reviewing what is currently available and whether this can be improved. While acknowledging the wide range of parental support (including GPs, schools, CAFs and signposting to other services), it was questioned whether parents were aware of all the services and options available to them. The group discussed the roles of children centre staff, teachers and Education Welfare and Health leads in schools and other settings around early intervention, suggesting more could be done to make sure these groups know the options available and develop ways to share information about these services.

b) Narrowing the Educational Achievement Gap

The group recognised that narrowing the educational achievement gap overlaps with other policy areas as disadvantaged and vulnerable children often face multiple problems (including challenging home life, poverty, EAL, on Free School Meals) and addressing gaps in educational achievement needs to reflect this. A specific challenge in Barnet is that the FSM gap in secondary schools has been increasing. The group noted the importance of tracking educational achievement to identify where intervention is needed, for example using Looked After Children and Virtual school methodology with Children in Need.

Intelligent use of Pupil Premium and sharing best practice in its use was seen as key to addressing the educational achievement gap. Using Pupil Premium and closely assessing its impact was seen as particularly important in increasing school attendance which often in turn impacts on a child's progress and attainment.

Working with specific groups to address the educational achievement gap was welcomed, for example inviting representatives from BME groups to express their views and contribute ideas, e.g. Grahame Park group/centre, OYA.org.uk

The group questioned whether service providers in the borough value the best Narrowing the Gap leaders and practitioners, and whether more can be done to use School Improvement Partnerships to focus on NtG work.

Challenges were identified around exclusions, particularly with the LA's lack of power in this area. Many excluded pupils do not have CAFs and more needs to be done to address this, by continuing to target promoting the use of CAFs with Governors of secondary schools. Another key challenge the group discussed was headteacher recruitment. Parenting programmes and mentors for NEETs and young people at risk of becoming NEET were identified as opportunities to build on.

c) Preparing Young People for Adulthood

Some of the key challenges identified were around age barriers and the costs to preparing young people for adulthood, further study or employment. Helping young people develop the skills and experience needed for the transition to employment was identified as an area with high public expectations. The group recognised the need to start preparing young people for adulthood from an earlier age and to extend support up to the age of 19, with young people now required to be in education, employment or training for longer.

Specific opportunities were suggested that could be developed to help prepare young people for employment, including offering more incentives for employers to offer apprenticeships and mentoring programmes to help young people to be job ready. The group recognised opportunities to build on good practice in successful schools in the borough, and that further work was required to widen and promote the vocational offer.

The group discussed the opportunities available through working closely with key partner, including Connexions and West London Alliance, to identify young people at risk at the earliest opportunity to enable effective intervention, advice and support to be put in place. After some early success, the group felt that this is an area should continue to be developed.

The afternoon was joined by young people and accompanying teachers and parents.

Session Two

Tony Lewis, Voice of the Child Coordinator for the council presented information designed to brief the young people about the Children's Trust Board and the context for the afternoon's session— please see PowerPoint attached.

a) Priorities Challenge

Young people and adults were asked to choose from 15 priorities for children's and young people's services which 10 services they thought were most important. Each young person and adult was given 10 coins to 'spend' across the 15 areas – to compare whether young people and adults had the same priorities.

Overall the young people and adults had very similar priorities. This shows that on the whole those who are in charge of young people's services know what young people want which is really positive. However, there were some important areas of difference – highlighted in bold in the list below:

Top priorities...

Young People;

- Helping disadvantaged children and young people do well at school
- Mental health services for children and young people
- Making sure everyone can read and write at primary school
- Protecting young people from bullying, violence and sexual exploitation
- **Youth centres and activities for teenagers**
- Reducing Child Poverty

Adults;

- Mental health services for children and young people
- Making sure everyone can read and write at primary school
- **Supporting young people with Special Educational Needs**
- Protecting young people from bullying, violence and sexual exploitation
- Helping disadvantaged children and young people do well at school
- **Support for under 5's and their families – education, healthcare and childcare**
- Reducing Child Poverty
- **Helping young people stay safe online**

For the detailed results, see the table below:

		Adults (15)	Young people (19)
1	Making sure everyone can read and write at primary school	14	17
2	Helping disadvantaged children and young people do well at school	11	19
3	Working with schools to help pupils with low attendance	1	6
4	Support for under 5's and their families – education, healthcare and childcare	11	13
5	Reducing childhood obesity by promoting healthy eating and exercise	9	11
6	Mental health services for children and young people	14	17
7	Youth centres and activities for teenagers	7	14
8	Reducing child poverty	11	14
9	Supporting struggling families when children are under 5	6	6
10	Support for children and young people with special educational needs	13	13
11	Protecting children and young people from bullying, violence and sexual exploitation	13	17
12	Helping children and young people stay safe online	11	9
13	Supporting young offenders to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour	8	13
14	Apprenticeships, training and work experience	10	10
15	Drug and alcohol abuse support for young people	10	10

Highlights from young people's discussions

- Key priorities:
 - **Mental health** was consistently seen as a key area for young people's services with more needing to be done to help children and young people with mental health issues, including self-harm
 - Tackling **inequality and racism** was raised as an important issue. One group mentioned that there was not much education in schools around **bullying**.
 - Lots of the discussion focused on **early intervention and prevention**, for example around **school attendance** and **child poverty**. Working with schools to help pupils with low attendance, although scoring low in

some groups, was raised by one group as important. Improving attendance was seen as having a big impact on a child's education and future.

- **Education** outside of school, e.g. in libraries, was also seen as important.
- What more can be done in Barnet for children and young people?
 - **Road safety** was raised as another priority that the council and other organisations should focus on as a lot of teenagers die in car accidents.
 - Improving **mental health services**
 - **Involve young people more** by listening to schools and having more political workshops
 - Having **youth groups** led by young people

Feedback from young people's discussions from the Priorities Challenge

Table 1

- Most important: **helping disadvantaged children and young people** do well at school – as this is really important for future.
- Least important: supporting struggling families when children are under 5 as young people thought responsibility for this lay with parents
- What is missing? Road safety, especially for teenagers

Table 2

- Most important: **mental health services** for children and young people and protecting children and young people from **bullying, violence and sexual exploitation**. Need for young people to have somewhere to go to talk about their problems – this should be encouraged to improve self-esteem.
- Least important: working with schools to help pupils with low attendance

Table 3

- Most important: ones that **focused on early intervention and prevention** e.g. literacy, emotional health. **Mental health** prevention most important.
- Least important: the ones that could have been prevented earlier

Table 4

- Most important: improving **mental health services** and **youth leisure**.
- What is missing? Libraries really important e.g. volunteering opportunities

Session Three

Young people were invited to develop questions to be put to the expert panel

1) What is being done for youth in Barnet for mental health issues?

- There are a lot of services in place for children and young people, but sometimes children and young people have to wait too long to see someone who can help support them or do not know enough about the services that are there to help them. Improving access to services and information about the range of services available is a priority for the council and health over the next year.
- 2) How will the council ensure that with a growing youth population young people's needs will be met and views heard?**
- The Board will continue to involve young people in events and the council funds and supports a range of ways for young people to engage e.g. Youth Shield, Youth Board, UK Youth Parliament. Tony is reviewing all of the ways in which young people can participate so that we can see what more needs to be done.
- 3) What is being done to help tackle racism?**
- The feedback from people in Barnet is that overall, people get on together well in the borough. Communities Together Network is a multi-agency forum for the council, police, voluntary sector, schools and other groups to come together to discuss community related issues.
- 4) Self-harm is a big problem among children and young people – what do you plan to do?**
- Improving mental health services as a whole is a priority for the Board and health services have a particular role to play. For example, it is important that when young people are admitted to accident and emergency units, young people are promptly referred for the right support and assistance.