

BARNET CHILDREN'S PARTNERSHIP BOARD

Draft Minutes of the Meeting Held on Tuesday 23 February 2021

Members Present:

Chris Munday	Executive Director for Children's Services (Chair)
Councillor David Longstaff	Lead Member for Children, Education & Safeguarding and Deputy Leader of Barnet Council
Ian Harrison	Chief Executive, Barnet Education and Learning Service (BELS)
Neil Marlow	Director, School Improvement and Traded Services, BELS
Lee Robinson	Children's Strategy & Policy Advisor
Janet Matthewson	Chief Executive Officer, Young Barnet Foundation
Sarah Sands	Head of Garden Suburb Infants, Chair of Nursery and Primary Headteachers' Forum
Ben Thomas	Assistant Director Education, Strategy and Partnerships, Family Services
Cassie Bridger	Assistant Director Greenspaces and Leisure
Karen Pearson	Head of 0-19 Early Help
Jayne Abbott	Resilience Programme Manager, Resilience Schools
Sharon Smith	Public Health Strategist, Children & young Peoples' Team
Oliver Taylor	Health and Policy Advisor, Barnet Public Health
Mav Ghalley	Designated Clinical Officer – SEND, NCL CCG
Rachel Wells	Consultant in Public Health, Children & Young People's Team
Adam Driscoll	Commissioning Lead, Growth and Development
Martin Serrao	Principal of St Marys and St Johns CE School
Emma Burton-Lee	Senior Communications and Campaigns Manager
Lisa Coffman	Barnet Parent Carers Forum
Shushma Jain	Co-Chair, Barnet Parent Carers Forum
Enver Osman	Service Development Officer, Family Services
Rebecca Morris	Voice of the Child Participation Officer
Tal Berman Howarth	Barnet Parent Carers Forum
Liz Longworth	Headteacher of Northside Primary School
Dara Darkwah	Member of Youth Parliament
Ishaan Shah	Member of Barnet and London Youth Assembly
Tani Ilemobola	Member of Youth Parliament

1. WELCOME

The Chairman, Chris Munday, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 09 November 2020 were agreed as an accurate record.

It was noted that the Education, School Improvement and School Places strategies were approved at the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee last November. The SEND partnership plan would be reported at the next Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee in May.

3. ABSENCE OF MEMBERS'

Apologies for absence were received from Samson Olusanya and Luke Ward.

4. COVID AND RECOVERY 'LOST LEARNING'

The Director of School Improvement and Traded Services presented the report. The Education Strategy discussed at the last meeting outlined the response to the pandemic and how schools and families have been supported.

£650m of the Department for Education (DFE) catch up funding had been allocated to support schools through the catch-up premium. £350m had been allocated to the National Tutoring Programme which would also support young people with regards to lost learning. A further £300m for schools had just been announced.

Options to make up for lost learning proposed by the government include summer schools, weekly tutoring and increased wellbeing support.

Current priorities were centred around minimising lost learning and supporting the well-being of pupils by ensuring that vulnerable children were going in to school regularly and those who were at home received regular welfare checks. A duty had been placed on schools last term to ensure a high-quality remote learning offer for all pupils.

Lateral flow testing had been introduced for school staff (home testing) and for secondary school students, which would be rolled out further once schools fully reopened on the 8th of March. Testing for secondary students would be done three times within the school environment and then twice a week in the home environment to ensure that a-symptomatic pupils or staff were not going in to school.

Schools have engaged very well and have successfully implemented strategies supported by BELS. Attendance levels of pupils were in line with national statistics and there has been high attendance levels at staff training sessions. A 'Covid Personal Education Plan' for Looked After Children had also been created to reflect the current situation.

The issue of elective home education was raised and how those pupils would be involved in 'catch up'. It was noted that there was nothing specific in the guidance for elective home education relating to catch up. With increased numbers of children being educated at home last year, an additional resource had been deployed to liaise with those families.

Some challenges faced by schools were keeping children safe, assessing pupil achievement via remote learning and anxiety levels with regards to 'catch up'. As children have missed out on social aspects of their lives, it was important that they were given access to enrichment. Schools had to implement measures to ensure that students were able to catch up with work whilst incorporating social factors so that their mental health was not impacted negatively.

Some schools had planned to focus on pastoral topics rather than the learning programme upon return to school. This was to ensure happiness amongst pupils and to address any anxiety levels, particularly separation issues.

It was noted that for some children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, (SEND) during lockdown, support was not available at the school and therefore the child was better off being at home. Long periods of thriving in their home environment made it more difficult to return to school. The SEND & Inclusion service was working closely with families to put in individual assessments and to provide individual support accordingly. The Open Space Project, for example, had been extended to provide respite for families.

The guidance offered for Special Schools was flexible and not punitive with the use of partnership working and joint assessments. Appropriate advice was needed to be put out to mainstream schools about children with Education, Health and Care Plans. (EHCPs) For those at university, hardship funds had been put in place by the government. Community Barnet continued to work with young people aged between 16-25 along with Middlesex University, providing a lot of welfare support especially for those in self-isolation.

KOOTH (for pupils) and Qwell (for staff) are available and provides online counselling and well-being support for young people, educational staff and parents or carers of children and young people with SEND.

5. HOLIDAY ACTIVITY PROGRAMME (FEBRUARY & SUMMER)

The Head of Early Years presented the report. The programme funded by the government would allow the service to provide fun activities for children eligible for free school meals during the summer, Easter, and Christmas holidays. Requirements of the programme include good quality provision with fun activities with an element of nutritional education and financial support information focusing on poverty issues and food.

It was noted that 10,000 children were eligible for free school meals, 50% of whom could access the activities for which a budget of £1.1m was available.

Volunteers would be trained to help with the programme to ensure its longevity. It would also be linked to other positive activity programmes provided in the council with partners in the voluntary sector by building on what was available, identifying gaps and reaching out to new providers to deliver as required.

Positive activity programmes were free for all children and young people and essential for those who missed out on social aspects during lockdown.

It was suggested that specialist interventions centred around nutrition and healthy weight in a six-week programme be aligned with the work being done for the holiday activity programme.

Young person, Tani, highlighted the large attainment gap between African Caribbean students and other students. To combat that differentiation, a free programme was launched by Tani's sister, previously a member of Youth Assembly, that offered students one to one tuition, homework club and mentoring sessions for character building so that young African Caribbean people could access the social interaction they had missed out on.

The website, <https://www.youngbarnetfoundation.org.uk/> was circulated during the meeting and more information would be shared with the board. Members were encouraged to get in touch with Tani to help support targeted ethnic minority groups.

Young Barnet Foundation was working on the Kitchen Social Project, data from which showed the 6 to 8 weeks development delay of children who suffered food insecurities and lack of positive activities in the summer. Longer term strategies were being developed with partners in relation to food provision and to link such issues to debt management.

It was noted that more young people were needed to drive positive activities within the borough.

6. YOUNG PEOPLE - TBA

Ishaan raised the issue of modern slavery which was prevalent in the UK with over 100,000 victims. The number of victims was noted to be significantly higher in London, hence potentially existent in our Borough. It was important that local government take the steps needed to prevent slavery and in doing so, Barnet could create its own modern slavery strategy. Support was requested from Ishaan to raise awareness, train emergency services and work with schools to minimise the risk of online exploitation in the digital world.

Barnet could lead the way in tackling modern slavery on a local level and once a framework was set in place, it could be shared with the London Youth Assembly to implement the Barnet model on a London wide level.

It was noted that modern slavery was one area of focus for the safeguarding children's partnership, working closely with community safety to be driven forward.

The Barnet Group did a lot of work with staff based on the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and involved people in the community to report on anything deemed to be nefarious.

Dara focused on the issue of grief as a result of death which had been emotionally consuming for young people especially during the pandemic. Dara asked the board what resources were available to staff supporting those bereaved and how those members of staff would be supported during the delivery of their services to young people.

Most of the support was provided by the mental health provision in the council. Grief Encounters <https://www.griefencounter.org.uk/> provided a very good service for children and young people. There was also Covid support and a bereavement service run by MIND in Barnet. Funding from the DFE allowed for staff to be trained by a Mental Health Lead incorporating pillars of recovery to help someone recover from trauma using psychological first aid. Staff in schools would be equipped with the knowledge on how to approach a young person or a distressed member of staff. In addition, Educational Psychologists were offering specialist workshops on bereavement and loss as well as behavioural communication. The Critical Incidence Policy was in place for schools to access for free.

Barnet Youth Board identified that there needed to be more affective race and diversity training for professionals within health and wellbeing services. Research had shown that there was a lack of diversity within the mental health sector in the UK. Training would help professionals overcome cultural barriers and understand what was needed in order to provide effective treatment.

Even though there was a mental health first aider at almost every school in Barnet, it was important that staff checked up on students who were not always willing to approach staff to talk about the state of their mental health.

The Chairman recommended that the item on mental health be brought back to the next meeting to enable a more detailed discussion.

As Chair of the Youth Board, Tani was running a campaign on the 13th of March about different careers young people could pursue, which was a big issue for young people who were struggling about what they could do. Tani welcomed Headteachers to partake who might be interested in speaking about their journey to becoming a Headteacher.

BELS provides post 16 careers information and guidance to secondary schools, many of whom have their own dedicated careers service, a legal requirement to ensure that all pupils received objective careers advice.

Members suggested promoting the Kickstart programme to schools that could help with CVs and back to work information.

Within Growth & Corporate Services, there was a skills and training team in connection with job centres and support programmes.

7. HEALTH & WELLBEING STRATEGY

The Public Health Strategist presented the draft Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy. It comprised the vision to improve health and wellbeing for people in Barnet aligned with other strategies including the life chances strategy. It focused on themes such as healthier place and resilient communities. It was a coordinated, holistic care package that would support an individual's needs throughout their lifetime.

The Health Impact Assessment was completed and continued to shape the work as part of the strategy. It encompassed all areas of life and wider determinants in relation to health and wellbeing. The 5 guiding principles were used to establish effective processes. All works carried out was robust and evidence based to allow for actions to be put forward.

Focus on children through continued engagement by partners would help pull together important key aspects that were critical to their health and wellbeing and would be incorporated into the strategy.

The strategy and consultation document are available online and the final draft would be reported to the Health and Wellbeing Board in April.

Members felt that the strategy was centred around health rather than wellbeing and whether it could include key points of children's lives. Differentiation was needed with regards to Children in Need, Child Protection, Looked After Children and children with SEND and what the strategy meant for any of those groups.

Members suggested that the strategy include the contribution of others as well as the agreements reached.

8. UNITAS UPDATE

The Chief Executive of Unitas presented the report. Government restrictions meant that a significantly lower number of children were accessing the centre, compared to numbers before lockdown when at least 900 children visited Unitas a week. It was reported that 185 children had been able to access services through 1-1 sessions, community outreach, digital engagement, mentoring, and detached youth work.

Many 17-19-year olds were struggling but agile support services were put in place for them via Unitas 2.0.

Together with Barnet Group, delivery of food parcels were being made. Home schooling has also been a struggle for parents to maintain consistency of online learning. Therefore, one to one sessions were set up for young people to access wi-fi at Unitas.

9. GREENSPACES & LEISURE

The item was moved to the next meeting.

10. ACTION PLAN

The board noted the plan.

11. LIFE CHANCES STRATEGY UPDATE

The board noted the strategy update.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Within Growth and Corporate Services, there was a team dealing with gigabit infrastructure and broadband delivery within the borough. It was noted that council properties would receive free broadband services by 2023. Because of the growing needs of children and young people with home schooling, the team was working with BELS to provide a guide for practitioners and other frontline workers. Free home-schooling packages were also being rolled out to improve connections for all those affected.

It was noted that Adam Driscoll would be stepping down as a member of the board. The Chairman thanked Adam for all his work on behalf of the board.

The meeting finished at 6pm.