



Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee

Wednesday 17th May 2017

Title	Barnet's Youth Voice Offer and report upon impact.
Report of	Voice of the Child Coordinator
Wards	All
Status	Public
Urgent	No
Key	No
Enclosures	None
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Summary

This report seeks to provide an overview of the delivery and impact of Family Service's participation and engagement activity, as overseen by the Voice of the Child Coordinator and delivered by the Voice of the Child Team. This activity is delivered in partnership with other local authority services and Voluntary and Community Sector organisations who all seek to ensure that the voices of children and young people within the borough are heard and that they are listened to.

This paper also seeks to outline the direction of travel for the forthcoming 2017 – 2019 Youth Voice Offer, replacing the previous Voice of the Child Strategy 2015 – 2017.

Recommendations

That the Committee note the following report upon the activity and the impact of Family Service's participation and engagement activity.

1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED

- 1.1 This report outlines the development of our children's participation and engagement activity, which is known operationally as our 'Youth Voice Offer'. This offer comprises of a number of Youth Voice Forums (YVF) that are open to all children and young people across our borough aged 11 – 18 (or 25 with SEND). Our YVF seek to provide them opportunity to have their voice heard and directly impact upon service improvement. Each YVF provides a unique platform for children's voices to be heard, but each YVF seeks to do this in a different way. They are:
 - Barnet Youth Board
 - UK Youth Parliament
 - Youth Assembly
 - SEND Youth Voice Forum
 - Young Commissioners
 - #BOP, our Children in Care Council.
- 1.2. Some YVF, such as Barnet Youth Board, are more consultative and provide the chance for senior leaders and organisations to sit down with children and young people and outline plans or proposals and obtain their feedback. Others, such as Youth Assembly, provide a public speaking opportunity for young members to discuss the issues locally that are important to them and then hear these motions debated at the Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee.
- 1.3. Barnet has delivered UK Youth Parliament elections for over 5 years regularly ensuring that yearly over 8000 young people aged 11 - 18 get their chance to elect their fellow peers to the office of Member of Youth Parliament for Barnet. We work collaboratively with schools, colleges and local organisations to ensure that a broad cross section of young residents are able to either vote or stand to be elected. The Voice of the Child Team then seek to support Youth Parliament members to bring their campaigns to life and encourage them to be ambassadors, champions and advocates for the interests of all young people across the borough.
- 1.4. Our Young Commissioners provide an opportunity for young people to help outline their views on services that we seek to commission and helps them co-produce with us service specification. Our SEND YVF provides a platform for children with SEND to inform us how the Local Offer can be improved and how they can impact upon ongoing improvement to children's experiences using services. Finally, our Children in Care Council, #BOP, provides an opportunity for Children in Care and Care Leavers to improve the quality of service for others and support one another to share experiences and to provide mentoring.
- 1.5. Our YVF's are inter-connected and a young person may wish to be a member of all of them or exclusively to one. We believe that our Youth Voice Offer helps raise aspirations and provides a platform for children and young people to discover more about citizenship, democracy and community activism.

1.6. Our previous Voice of the Child Strategy 2015 - 17 outlined key objectives that sought to ensure that the voices of children and young people are heard and impacting upon service improvement. Its progress has been monitored by the Voice of the Child Strategy Group. Just some of our outcomes and impacts include:

- Over 60 individual children and young people are attending one of our 6 different Youth Voice Forums each quarter ensuring that the participation and engagement of Barnet's children and young people within service design, co-production and strategy shaping has increased year on year. Our young members have contributed their views and directly impacted service redesign within: mental health provision, library transformations, parks and open spaces, Barnet's use of digital media, how to tackle child sexual exploitation and domestic violence, improvements to leisure centres and public health matters such as obesity and shisha smoking. A good example of the changes that have been made as a result of our Youth Voice activity can be seen by the re-commissioning of Young Carers services. The impact of young people's involvement in this commissioning activity is a Young Carers service that is now delivering the appropriate level of provision and ensuring that young carers are appropriately supported through means such as respite and peer support, which were all outlined as vital for young people.
- Members of Barnet Youth Board informed the development of Child Safe Houses which were developed by Kings College London (Commissioned by the NHS). Young members informed project officers of the types of services that should be made available within the safe houses for victims of sexual assault or sexual abuse. The Children's Commissioner for England & Wales reported back to Parliament our young people's involvement and how that the Child Safe Houses will be truly co-produced and as a consequence will provide lasting impact for victims of sexual assault and abuse.
- 89% of children and young people attending our Youth Voice Forums report increased self-esteem, confidence and resilience. 92% report a greater understanding of democratic processes and a feeling of increased citizenship.
- We have overseen award winning delivery of high level engagement events including a Gold Commendation from the Children's Commissioner for planning and delivering Barnet's Youth Convention in 2015. Young delegates informed us their priorities for the Borough and their insight directly informed and helped co-produce the Children and Young People's Plan 2016 - 2020 and helped create our new Charter for Children and Young People. Furthermore the Children's Partnership Board, overseeing the Children and Young People's Plan, includes membership and representation from our Youth Parliament members - ensuring that new policy and strategic approaches are open to comment and scrutiny by young people themselves.

- Refresh of our Children in Care Council, #BOP, with an Improvement Plan designed and implemented to ensure on-going improvement of its activity and impact has occurred. A key priority for #BOP has been to link Children in Care & Care Leavers in with wider community activity and opportunity. As a consequence, Children in Care have been instrumental within the development of Barnet's forthcoming Youth Zone. The Young Person's Development Group, which has comprised of Barnet Children in Care, have ensured that the name of the Youth Zone, 'Unitas', and it's branding have been youth led and that planning and wider community promotion and marketing have been directed by young people. It is anticipated that when Unitas opens in 2018 the activities on offer, the aesthetic of the building and the values that Unitas will hold will be co-produced by young people.
- #BOP members worked with Family Service's commissioners in order to outline their views upon what is important to them, and what should be considered for other children, when Family Services require placements from Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA's) and other specialist providers when children come in to care or need to move placement. Their insight was then mixed with insight from other Children in Care across the West London Alliance and directly informed the West London Alliance Children's Procurement Conference on 18th October, hosted at Brent Civic Centre. At this event several IFA's were present to hear from young people how their provision can be improved, and crucially how services can work more effectively together in order to ensure that children receive the best possible outcomes when moving to a new placement. As a result of this work the immediate changes are that the specifications that we give to IFA's and specialist providers now reflect what young people feel needs to be included within their provision (e.g. meetings with placements before arriving there and more information given to children ahead of placement changes in a more timely fashion).
- Youth Parliament elections that have ensured over the past two years participation from over 11,000 children and young people across secondary education that has helped raise awareness within the borough of democratic processes and positive citizenship.
- Each year over 6000 children and young people within Barnet participate in Make Your Mark - the UK's largest annual consultative ballot of young people to find out what issues matter most to them. In 2016 Barnet's young people informed that tackling racial discrimination, improving mental health provision and safety for young people on public transport is important to them. As a result, the impact of this is that in 2017 the Voice of the Child Team and our Equalities Officer will be delivering workshops within schools updating Barnet's young person population upon what our response

is to racial discrimination. These workshops will be co-produced by one of our Youth Parliament members.

- Our commitment to co-production with children and young people is evident through involving them in designing new service offers for: homelessness services, tackling gangs and serious youth violence and supporting our care leavers to co-create our care leaver offer as outlined in our Care Leavers Strategy. For example, in advance of the publication of our Care Leavers Strategy we engaged closely with care leavers to understand in more detail their 'lived experience'. A key message that came from them is that they need greater support with managing their finances and with budgeting when living independently. As a result, we have made this one of our priorities within the Care Leavers strategy. Overall, the difference that this strong approach to co-production will make, is that moving forward services will be more responsive, more reflective of need and more likely to achieve positive outcomes for children and young people.
- A review of our approach to Youth Homelessness through a task and finish group has facilitated engagement with young people who have experienced homeless services in Barnet and seeking their views on what we can improve. A small group of young people are helping us to produce information for 16/17 year olds at risk of homelessness and co-design a new pathway that improves our assessment, planning, the quality and amount of supply and the provision of wrap around support for young people experiencing homelessness.
- A new team, REACH was established in Children's Social Care to work with young people presenting with high risk and vulnerability to CSE, Gangs and Missing. The team comprises of a co-located and multi-professional team of social workers, family support workers, educational psychologist, virtual school workers, speech & language therapists, a systemic psychotherapist, police and health working together to rapidly assess and intervene with young people and their families using a whole family approach. The approach is rapid and mobile, meeting young people in the spaces they occupy to wrap around their needs and facilitate safety and change. MAC-UK have obtained funding from Health Education England (HEE) to partner with Barnet and implement their 'Integrate' approach. A YOT involved child in care with experience of risk and vulnerability participated in the HEE bid and will be joining MAC-UK in Barnet as an employed Youth Consultant. The Integrate model is aimed at developing a psychologically informed workforce and services through an embedded MAC-UK team and through co-production and design with children and young people.

- Establishment of London's largest Youth Assembly - providing a public platform for young people to debate what matters to them and for Elected Members to act upon this.
- Up to 4000 young people across the borough have directly contributed their views to CAMHS transformation plans and the review of 0 – 19 youth provision within the borough. Our 'Youthorium' youth conference held at Allianz Stadium in February 2017 was attended by over 100 young people. In addition, schools focus groups and online surveys have further sought to allow young people's views to be heard. These views have included insights such as mental health support needs to tackle stigma within school and communities and that digital technology plays an important role in delivering support. These views will contribute to shaping the final service specification and young people will be involved in commissioning a provider to deliver the new children's mental health and well-being service. As a result of listening to the views of young people we have already commissioned KOOTH, an online counselling and support service which goes live on 22nd May. Young people will be involved in the implementation and evaluation of this service. More information on this consultation and engagement activity is outlined within section 10.1 onwards.
- Secured a high level partnership with UNICEF in order for Barnet to be an official Child Rights Partner and to deliver their Child Rights Partner Programme – ensuring that children's rights within our borough are upheld and championed.

- 1.7 Whilst we are proud of our achievements, much more remains to be done. The formation of a 'Youth Voice Offer' means that we are able to accurately lay down what it is we seek to deliver that will help us achieve our strategic objectives and, crucially, how we are going to do it. The 'offer' is open to all schools, colleges organisations and children to take full advantage of and promote Youth Voice activity across our borough. The forthcoming new participation and engagement strategy, "The Youth Voice Offer 2017 – 2019" will be published in May 2017. Our schools engagement work, promoting and marketing the Youth Voice Offer, will be at the heart of our publicity approach for the Youth Voice Offer between now and the end of the academic year

2. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to note the report and the participation and engagement activity and its impact.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED

- 3.1 Not applicable.

4. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

- 4.1 The Youth Voice Offer 2017 – 2019 will be implemented from May 2017 and its implementation and governance will be overseen by the Voice of the Child Strategy Group, chaired by the Strategic Lead for Children and Young People.

5. IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION

5.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance

- 5.1.1 Our Children and Young People Plan 2016 – 2020 outlines how we seek to ensure that our vision of Barnet becoming the most Family Friendly Borough in London by 2020 will be met. One of our key intended outcomes within the Plan, that drives our work, is to ensure that children and young people within our borough *'Have their say and are active citizens'*

- 5.1.2 Our Vision is that all of our children, young people and families will have the opportunity to participate in decisions that affect their lives and have their voices heard. We believe that by being active citizens children and young people will be able to hold control over their lives, challenge one another to raise aspirations and commit to making Barnet the most Family Friendly borough in London with resilience at their core.

- 5.1.3 In return, we will seek to ensure that they have transparent access to the services that make key decisions on their behalf. Even more, we will ensure that they have the opportunity to review these services and shape how they are planned and delivered. We are committed to co-production. Our vision goes further and expects that all services working with children and young people take into account the voice of the child as a first thought rather than an afterthought.

5.2 Resources (Finance & Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)

- 5.2.1 The budget for the delivery of children's participation and engagement activity is contained within the Family Services budget and agreed through budget planning process.

5.3 Social Value

- 5.3.1 N/A

5.4 Legal and Constitutional References

- 5.4.1 Council's Constitution, in the Responsibility for Functions, Annex A, outlines that the Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee is responsible for those powers, duties and functions of the Council in relation to Children's Services (including schools).

5.5 Risk Management

- 5.5.1 There are no risks directly associated with this decision. The risks associated with the delivery of children's participation and engagement activity are reported, mitigated and governed through Family Services.

5.6 Equalities and Diversity

- 5.6.1 The 2010 Equality Act outlines the provisions of the Public Sector Equalities Duty which requires Public Bodies to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010,
- advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups,
- foster good relations between people from different groups

The broad purpose of this duty is to integrate considerations of equality into day to day business and keep them under review in decision making, the design of policies and the delivery of services. Equalities and Diversity considerations are a key element of the Council's approach to safeguarding and service delivery. It is anticipated that the further delivery of children's participation and engagement activity will further strengthen and promote equality and diversity.

5.7 Consultation and Engagement

- 5.7.1 A core component of the activity of the Voice of the Child Team is to deliver and support consultation and engagement activity with children and young people across the borough in order to inform service improvement and design. Recently our annual Young People's Perception Survey 2016 outlined, following responses from 545 young people that for them the most concerning issues within Barnet were:

- Crime
- Lack of jobs
- Lack of recreational activity.

- 5.7.2 In addition to this survey, a parallel recent engagement and consultation programme conducted between January and March 2017 sought to gather the views of young residents upon transformations to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and Youth Services (as part of the wider 0 – 19 review).

- 5.7.3 Through this engagement and consultation programme young residents were consulted through 3 key mechanisms:

- **Online survey activity (through our annual Youth Parliament elections)**
- **Focus groups delivered within schools, colleges and organisations**
- **Delivery of a high level youth conference titled 'Youthorium' delivered on 23rd February 2017 at the Allianz Stadium.**

5.7.4 Up to 7899 children responded to our online survey activity. Just over 300 children and young people participated within our Youthorium conference and schools focus groups combined. We therefore believe that we have obtained rich insights from the perspective of children and young people into mental health provision and youth service provision within our borough.

5.7.5 As a result of this consultation and engagement programme, when combined with the aforementioned Young People's Resident Survey 2016, over-arching and repeated themes and issues reported by children and young people within the borough were:

- **Crime, gangs and youth violence:** A prominent message emanating from young residents is that they are increasingly aware of, and fearful, of crime, gangs and serious youth violence within the borough. We were told by young residents that this is impacting upon their desire to travel to other areas of the borough and therefore resulting in an increase in youth parochialism. It is also important to consider that Barnet is statistically a very safe borough to live, work and study in. Overall however, young participants told of their increased fear of becoming a victim of crime.
- **Future job and employability prospects:** With regards to future opportunities for children and young people, our consultation and engagement activity highlighted acute awareness that the pressure to achieve good grades in school, further education and higher education is strong in the face of a competitive jobs market. Although Barnet's schools are some of the best performing within London and nationally, and our young people live in a capital city full of opportunity, young participants informed us of exam pressure, anxiety and lack of sleep due to the pressure they face educationally to achieve. Interestingly young participants, particularly within our schools focus group activity, often had limited awareness of the opportunities that were available to them in their local area such as volunteering opportunities, leisure opportunities and engaging with voluntary and community sector organisations that could all help support their personal development and future employability prospects. It was also clear that in their view there is more that could be done to promote opportunities to young people through digital platforms. Engaging in universal positive activities was seen as a good thing and, whilst targeted youth provision for those in need was seen to be needed too, many young participants felt that the perception of targeted youth work was that this was just for 'the bad kids' and that those that were progressing well did not have this same level of support.
- **Mental health and emotional wellbeing** Young participants informed that they are acutely aware of the need for good mental health in order to lead happy and fulfilling lives. However a primary message emanating from the consultation and engagement activity is one of the need to tackle the stigma that is associated with being open about the subject. 2693 young respondents informed that they would approach

family in the first instance for help if they felt that they were experiencing an emerging difficulty with their mental health. Further still, face to face support, schools based support and the use of technology were seen as the top 3 ways in which support should be delivered for children and young people facing mental health difficulties. Young participants acknowledged that they are aware that there is a need for support delivered through a blend of provision. However, for a young person to publically acknowledge the need for that help and for society to tackle the stigma that will make it acceptable to ask for help is the first ultimate hurdle to overcome.

- 5.7.6 Responses, and the production of an action plan in order to address the issues identified by children and young people, will be produced in partnership through the Children's Partnership Board, which is also comprised of membership of young people. A clear communications strategy, targeted towards young residents that seeks to inform, raise awareness of and provide support in respect of the issues identified will be produced. In respect of the thematic issues of CAMHS transformation and the 0 – 19 review, the data gathered and insights gleaned will be considered by the CCG and the 0 – 19 review project board respectively.

5.8 Insight

5.8.1 N/A

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 6.1 Voice of the Child Strategy 2015-17
- 6.2 Children and Young People Plan 2016-2020