

	<b>Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee</b>  <b>11<sup>th</sup> January 2021</b>
<b>Title</b>	Life Chances Strategy 2020-24
<b>Report of</b>	Chairman of the Committee- Councillor David Longstaff
<b>Wards</b>	All
<b>Status</b>	Public
<b>Urgent</b>	No
<b>Key</b>	Yes
<b>Enclosures</b>	Appendix 1: Life Chances Strategy Appendix 2: Life Chances Public Consultation Report Appendix 3: Equalities Impact Assessment
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<b>Summary</b>	
<p>This paper seeks approval from the Committee to give final approval of the Life Chances Strategy from the period 2020 to 2024.</p> <p>A draft of the strategy had previously been presented to the Committee and given approval earlier this year. Since then the Covid-19 crisis has happened and the strategy has had to be revised to ensure it fully meets the needs of young people. A range of consultations have taken place with key stakeholders including input from council services, external partners, children and young people and the public to reflect their views.</p> <p>This new Life Chances Strategy (2020-24) restates Barnet's pledge to help young people succeed as part of the family friendly vision, through priorities and actions to build families and children's resilience and ensure better outcomes.</p>	

## **Recommendations**

- 1. That the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee approve the Life Chances Strategy 2020-24 and appendices.**

### **1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED**

- 1.1 A Life Chances Strategy has been developed to provide support to young people and families. Improving life chances can have a profound effect on poverty and inequality, enabling better outcomes for young people in the borough
- 1.2 The previous approach was captured in the child poverty strategy set out in the Children and Young People's Plan 2016-20. It supported the family friendly vision which is focused on making Barnet the most family friendly borough in London and an even better place for all families to live.
- 1.3 Barnet has remained among the top performing local authority areas in the country in relation to the achievement of children and young people. However, areas of deprivation exist in the borough and there is pressing need for partners to focus on working together to improve young lives and increase opportunities, addressing the drivers of child poverty and building resilience to improve future outcomes.
- 1.4 A draft of this Life Chances strategy had been approved for public consultation in March 2020 when the Covid-19 pandemic struck. The pandemic has disrupted the life of every child in the country. This strategy has therefore been updated to take account of the impact of Covid-19 on life chances.
- 1.5 This strategy has been developed in consultation with services across the Council, children and young people as well as external partners. It has received approval from the Children's Partnership Board with input from key stakeholders including Voluntary & Community Sector, Clinical Commissioning Group, Family Services, Barnet Public Health, Corporate Communications, Housing, Barnet Education and Learning Services, and Growth & Development services. Input was also received from a young people's focus group.
- 1.6 Delegated authority was given to the Executive Director, Children and Young People at the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee on 11 March [2020](#) to consider consultation responses and agree the final strategy which is presented here at Appendix 1. However, the public consultation was delayed by several months as a direct result of the Covid-19 crisis.

#### **Summary of the new strategy**

- 1.7 Barnet remains committed to reducing child poverty and this Life Chances Strategy sets out the approach to improving lives and increasing opportunities. The Covid-

19 pandemic has disrupted the life of every child in the country creating an unprecedented public health emergency and challenging our society and our economy.

- 1.8 Prior to the pandemic published figures highlighted the progress that has been made in Barnet on reducing the number of children living in poverty, with 14.0% of children under the age of 16 living in low income families in 2016 compared to 24.9% in 2006. Education results have also improved and are among the best in the country.
- 1.9 This strategy has therefore been updated to take account of the impact of Covid-19 on life chances. It sets out a needs analysis, which provides an overview of the emerging picture around life chances in Barnet, and an action plan structured against the strategic priorities. The new strategy outlines a renewed commitment by all services across Barnet to improve outcomes for children, young people and families. The four existing priorities have been retained but new actions have been developed in light of the needs analysis and in response to the impacts of Covid-19. The priorities are:

**Priority 1: Strengthening families and early years**

**Priority 2: Developing resilience and improving education**

**Priority 3: Delivering equal access to opportunities**

**Priority 4: Targeting support**

Detailed actions supporting each of these priorities are set out in the Life Chances Strategy in Appendix 1.

## **2. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 In 2016, the Welfare Reform and Work Act repealed sections of the Child Poverty Act which placed a statutory duty on local authorities to produce a child poverty strategy. It instead places emphasis on life chances measures using indicators such as long-term workless households and educational attainment of all pupils. This new strategy demonstrates Barnet's commitment to improving the life chances of young residents. It enhances the previous child poverty strategy which was set out in the Children and Young People's Plan 2016-20 and ends March 2020. This draft strategy has been developed in consultation with services across the Council as well as external partners.
- 2.2 The Life Chances Strategy in this report is recommended for approval.

### **3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 3.1 The alternative option is to not have a new strategy to help improve the life chances of young residents. However, this could have a profound impact on inequality and successful outcomes for children and young people.

### **4. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION**

- 4.1 The implementation of the strategy will be monitored by the Children's Partnership Board.
- 4.2 Once agreed by the Committee, the Life Chances strategy will be published on the Barnet Council website

### **5. IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION**

#### **5.1 Corporate priorities and performance**

- 5.1.1 Ensuring that residents live happy, healthy, independent lives with the most vulnerable protected is one of the council's three strategic outcomes set out in its corporate plan, Barnet 2024, based on the core principles of fairness, responsibility and opportunity to make sure Barnet is a place:

- of opportunity, where people can further their quality of life
- where people are helped to help themselves, recognising that prevention is better than cure
- where responsibility is shared, fairly where services are delivered efficiently to get value for money for the taxpayer.

- 5.1.2 The Life Chances Strategy supports delivery of this outcome through a range of actions against the priorities to:

- Strengthen families and early years.
- Develop resilience and improve education.
- Deliver equal access to opportunities
- Target support

- 5.1.3 The strategy also contributes to the delivery of the objective to ensure that Barnet is a family friendly borough.

## 5.2 **Resources (Finance & Value For Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)**

The work to drive the delivery of the life chances strategy will be delivered from within existing resources of the Council and its partners.

## 5.3 **Legal and constitutional references**

5.3.1 The Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 repealed sections of the Child Poverty Act 2010 and re-named the Act the Life Chances Act 2010. There is therefore no longer a duty for local authorities to assess needs and produce a child poverty strategy. The 2016 Act focuses on supporting people into work and supporting low income working families, with the Government being required to publish data on the number of children living in workless households in England and long-term workless households in England, as well as the educational attainment of children and disadvantaged children in England at the end of Key Stage 4.

5.3.2 As outlined in Article 7 of the Council's Constitution - Committees, Forums, Working groups and Partnerships, the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee's responsibilities include all matters relating to children, schools, and education.

## 5.4 **Risk management**

None

## 5.5 **Equalities and diversity**

5.5.1 The Council has a duty contained in section 149 of the Equality Act to have due regard to the need to:

(a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;

(b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;

(c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

- age
- disability;
- gender reassignment;
- pregnancy and maternity;
- race;
- religion or belief;
- sex;
- sexual orientation.

5.5.2 The broad purpose of this duty is to integrate considerations of equality into day to day business and to keep them under review in decision making, the design of

policies and the delivery of services. Outcomes for all groups of children are monitored including children with special education needs and disadvantaged children.

5.5.3 A full equalities impact assessment has been produced (See Appendix 3) and identified that in relation to most protected characteristics there is a net positive impact because of the strategy in the long term. However, relating to protected characteristics such as disability and race, there is a disproportionate negative affect in education and employment outcomes which may be exacerbated by the pandemic. The strategy outlines key actions taken to address and provide support to improve these issues.

## 5.6 Corporate Parenting Principles

5.6.1 In July 2016, the Government published their Care Leavers' strategy Keep on Caring which outlined that the "... [the government] will introduce a set of corporate parenting principles that will require all departments within a local authority to recognise their role as corporate parents, encouraging them to look at the services and support that they provide through the lens of what a reasonable parent would do to support their own children.'

5.6.2 The corporate parenting principles set out seven principles that local authorities must have regard to when exercising their functions in relation to looked after children and young people, as follows

1. to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people;
2. to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings;
3. to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people;
4. to help those children and young people gain access to, and make the best use of, services provided by the local authority and its relevant partners;
5. to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people;
6. for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and;
7. to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

5.6.3 The needs of children in care and care leavers are at the forefront of considerations in development of the Life Chances strategy. Research shows there are barriers to children in care and care leavers engaging in education, employment and training. The strategy seeks to improve achievement and attendance in school. Other areas of support include continuation of programmes to ensure care leavers are fully supported to move into sustained employment, education and training.

## 5.7 Consultation and engagement

5.7.1 During the last few months, consultations and information has been taken from a range of sources and key stakeholders including council services, external partners and children and young people.

- Public Health analysis of the latest available information
- Consultations with key delivery areas within Barnet Council - Early Years, 0-25, Children in Care, Social Services, Public Health, Voice of the Child forum, Barnet Education & Learning Service, Growth & Development, Barnet Homes
- Consultations with external partners included the Voluntary & Community Sector, Clinical Commissioning Group and Unicef
- Analysis of Young People's Survey Feb 20 and the Young People's Covid-19 Survey July 20.

5.7.2 Public consultation on the draft Life Chances Strategy ran from 2 July until 4 December 2020.

5.7.3 Consultation consisted of an online survey and supporting documents on the 'Engage Barnet' consultation portal, which allowed people to view and comment on the draft strategy.

5.7.4 The consultation was widely promoted through Barnet First, the council's website and the council's Twitter and Facebook accounts.

5.7.5 21 responses were received to the consultation via the online survey on [engage.barnet.gov.uk](https://engage.barnet.gov.uk) with overall support for the strategy, these responses are summarised below and the full report can be found in Appendix 3.

- Overall the draft Life Chances Strategy 2020-2024 was supported by respondents, with 70% of respondents agreeing with all the priorities and actions of the strategy to some extent, in contrast to 5% of respondents disagreeing.
- **Strengthening families and early years, Developing resilience and improving education and Delivering equal access to opportunities** received the most support with 80% of respondents agreeing to these priorities. This was followed by **Targeting support** with 75% approving.
- Most of the respondents agreed with the actions set out under each priority with at least 70% agreeing with the actions recorded.
- **Under Strengthening families and early years** 77% agreed with the actions listed. There was broadly similar level of support under **Developing resilience and improving education** with 71% agreeing. Again, a comparable level of support under **Delivering access to equal opportunities** as 77% agreed and **Targeting support** with 77% agreeing.

- Respondents were asked if they had any further comments to make on the priority and/or actions. There were a range of responses received and common themes included more support for young people with mental health issues and physical disabilities. These have been incorporated into the strategy.

5.7.6 In addition to the online survey, presentations were made to Barnet Parent Carers Forum and the Voice of the Child Young People's Forum for views and comments. The draft strategy has been updated to take account of the consultation responses.

## **6. BACKGROUND PAPER**

None