

# Life Chances Strategy 2020-2024



# **1. Introduction**

This revised draft Life Chances Strategy sets out the approach to improving life chances in Barnet, building on the Child Poverty Strategy 2016-20. It outlines how we will work to improve young lives and increase their opportunities to succeed. The strategy is underpinned by our family friendly vision that is focused on making Barnet the most family friendly borough in London and a better place for all families to live.

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. Successful outcomes for young people have been supported through tackling high priority areas such as workless households, improving educational attainment and supporting ‘troubled families’.

A draft of this strategy had been approved for public consultation in March when the Covid-19 pandemic struck. The pandemic has disrupted the life of every child in the country. It is not only an unprecedented public health emergency, but also a challenge to our society and our economy, one that has been not seen in UK peacetime. The impact could have a serious effect on the life chances of young people in Barnet. They have already experienced the pandemic crisis and lockdown in many ways, from their education to staying at home, from the way they access health and support services to their emotional health and well-being.

Measures taken to tackle the crisis including online lessons, enforcing social distancing and working from home, have been necessary. However, there has been a significant impact on children and young people particularly those from low-income families, with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) or living in poverty. The specific nature of the economic shock associated with COVID-19 has exacerbated the social and economic divide. There have been sharp differences in deaths from COVID-19 with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups particularly affected.<sup>1</sup> The crisis has had a disproportionate effect on children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). It is likely to leave many challenging legacies for inequality which will need to be addressed. There is also much uncertainty about the ongoing potential impacts of the pandemic, with children likely to face the long-term consequences of economic recession, including sustainability related to employment and housing. The crisis has badly hit the voluntary sector with many organisations and community groups that support young people under pressure, facing reduced income at just the time when demand for their services has risen hugely.

Child poverty is expected to grow significantly from the estimated 4 million children and young people in the UK already in poverty<sup>2</sup>, and the increase in unemployment is already disproportionately impacting on young people. This means that working as a partnership to improve young people’s life chances and their opportunities to succeed has become even more important. By improving life chances, we can have a profound effect on poverty and inequality enabling better outcomes for young people in the borough.

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

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<sup>1</sup>[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/908434/Disparities\\_in\\_the\\_risk\\_and\\_outcomes\\_of\\_COVID\\_August\\_2020\\_update.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/908434/Disparities_in_the_risk_and_outcomes_of_COVID_August_2020_update.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://cpag.org.uk/child-poverty/child-poverty-facts-and-figures>

in Barnet, and an action plan structured against the strategic priorities. Delivery of the action plan will be monitored through the Children's Partnership Board.

## **2. Life Chances and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child**

We are committed to upholding children's rights within Barnet and over the next three years, the London Borough of Barnet, including all its delivery partners, will work with UNICEF to progressively achieve a number of core outcomes within the Children and Young People's Plan 2019-2023. The overarching ambition is for the borough to be recognised by UNICEF UK as a UNICEF Child Friendly Community.

There are several articles from the UNCRC which are relevant to improving life chances.

**Article 3** (best interest of the child) The best interest of the child must be a top priority in all decisions and actions that affect children.

**Article 6** (life, survival and development) Every child has the right to life. Governments must do all they can to ensure that children survive and develop to their full potential.

**Article 12** (respect for the views of the child) Every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously.

**Article 24** (health and health services) Every child has the right to the best possible health. Governments must provide good quality health care, clean water, nutritious food, and a clean environment and education on health and well-being so that children can stay healthy.

**Article 26** (social security) Every child has the right to benefit from social security. Governments must provide social security, including financial support and other benefits.

**Article 27** (adequate standard of living) Every child has the right to a standard of living that is good enough to meet their physical and social needs and support their development.

## **3. What young people have told us**

Young people's opinions are important and help shape our strategic priorities.

The Young Persons Survey (YPS), a bi-annual face-to-face survey of Barnet young residents aged 11-18, was undertaken by an independent research company. 500 Barnet young people were interviewed between 12th November – 20th December 2019. This was the third time the survey had been undertaken and it provided important information on the views of young people in Barnet.

- The majority (84%) of young people feel Barnet is a family friendly place to live which is in line with 2017 and an increase from 2016 survey (81%).
- All measures about the council's image have improved. More young people think the council is: doing a good job (92%, up from 73% in 2017), provides the services young people need (86%, up from 71% in 2017), does enough to keep young people safe (75% - up from 69% in 2017) and involves young people when making decisions (60%, up from 57% in 2017) .

- Young people’s top three concerns are crime (56%, up from 53% in 2017), litter in the streets (37% up from 21% in 2017), and lack of jobs for people/young people (24%, down from 33% in 2017).
- Young people’s views on priorities for the council and its partners are that they the top priority should be protecting people from crime (45%, up from 28% in 2017), followed by protecting young people from harm (43%, up from 31% in 2017) and supporting young people with mental health problems (29%, up from 21% in 2017).

Following the COVID-19 crisis, an online survey was carried out, aimed at Year 5, Year 6 and all secondary school students, to which 853 young people responded between 8th July – 30th July. The results highlighted the impact, concerns and worries - providing useful information to support young people, which will be used to inform this strategy.

- The majority of young people consider the effect of the crisis to be, doing less physical activity (51%) followed by harm to their long-term education (50%), and their mental health and well-being being affected (43%).
- Young people say they were most worried about their education and exams (55%) during lockdown, followed by staying safe from the coronavirus (35%) and their mental health and well-being (34%).
- The majority of young people think more support should be provided for dealing with stress and isolation (51%) followed by close and regular contact with teachers (46%) and exercises for children while at home (45%).
- A survey of young people with special education needs and disabilities found that their key concerns related to increased anxiety and other mental health needs resulting from ‘lockdown’ and uncertainty about the future; Lost learning due to not being in school and not able to access on-line learning due to poor IT access and/or learning need not being met remotely; Impact on access to further/higher education and employability.

## **4. Barnet’s profile**

### **4.1 Barnet’s population**

Barnet is the largest borough in London by population (402, 700) and is continuing to grow. Similarly, the number of children (aged 0-19 years) in Barnet, currently 99,300 (almost a quarter of the Boroughs population) is also projected to increase between 2020 and 2030, by 4.9% to 104,200. The projected increase is largely due to regeneration with the greatest projected growth in the number of young people in Colindale ward rising by 56.8% from about 8,100 in 2020 to 12,700 in 2030<sup>3</sup>. In Barnet the gender breakdown is Girls: 48.5% and boys: 51.6%<sup>4</sup>. Children and young people from Black and Ethnic Minority background make up 52% of the population. Based on data from the Annual Population

<sup>3</sup> <https://jsna.barnet.gov.uk/1-demography>

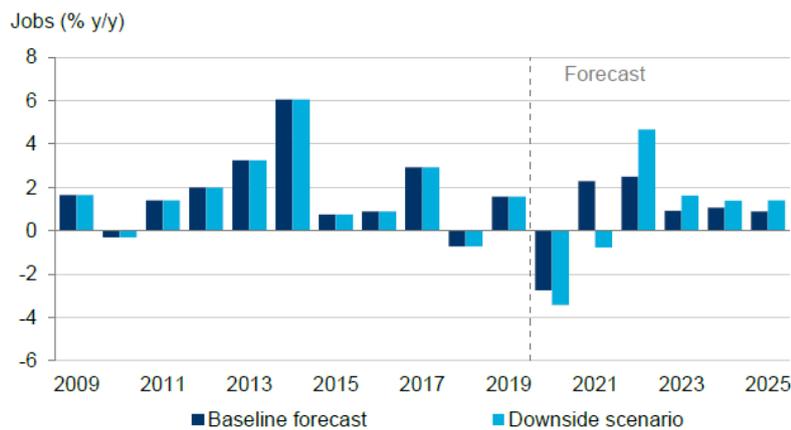
<sup>4</sup> <https://www.barnet.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2019-06/Barnet%20Children%20%26%20Young%20Peoples%20Plan%20Digital.pdf>

Survey, the most common religion in Barnet is Christianity (39.2%), followed by the Jewish (19.2%) and Muslim (11.8%) faiths.<sup>5</sup>

## 4.2 Barnet's economy

Barnet's economy is projected to contract by 9% in 2020 according to a recent study by the West London Alliance (WLA)<sup>6</sup>, with some sectors seeing more of a decline than others. The education, construction, retail, and hospitality sectors are likely to be experiencing particularly large falls in Gross Value Added (GVA). In terms of jobs, workplace employment in Barnet is projected to contract by 3%, or 4,600, in 2020. The accommodation & food services, wholesale & retail, construction, entertainment, and professional services sectors account for the majority of these job losses. However, the report suggests, these sectors, like most others, should see rebounds in 2021. See Figure 1

Fig 1. Baseline workplace, employment and scenario, Barnet, 2009-25, % y/y



Source: Oxford Economics

The study highlights that amongst London boroughs, Barnet has low exposure to the at-risk manufacturing, hospitality and transport sectors, good broadband connectivity, and a workforce that is likely to adapt well to working from home. These are advantages. It also has high levels of self-employment, and a concentration of micro- and small businesses in the professional services, construction and retail sectors. While these are normally strengths, they also make Barnet more vulnerable to the impacts of coronavirus.

<sup>5</sup><https://jsna.barnet.gov.uk/jsna/demography>

<sup>6</sup> How might the coronavirus impact the West London economy? (A report for the West London Alliance June 2020)

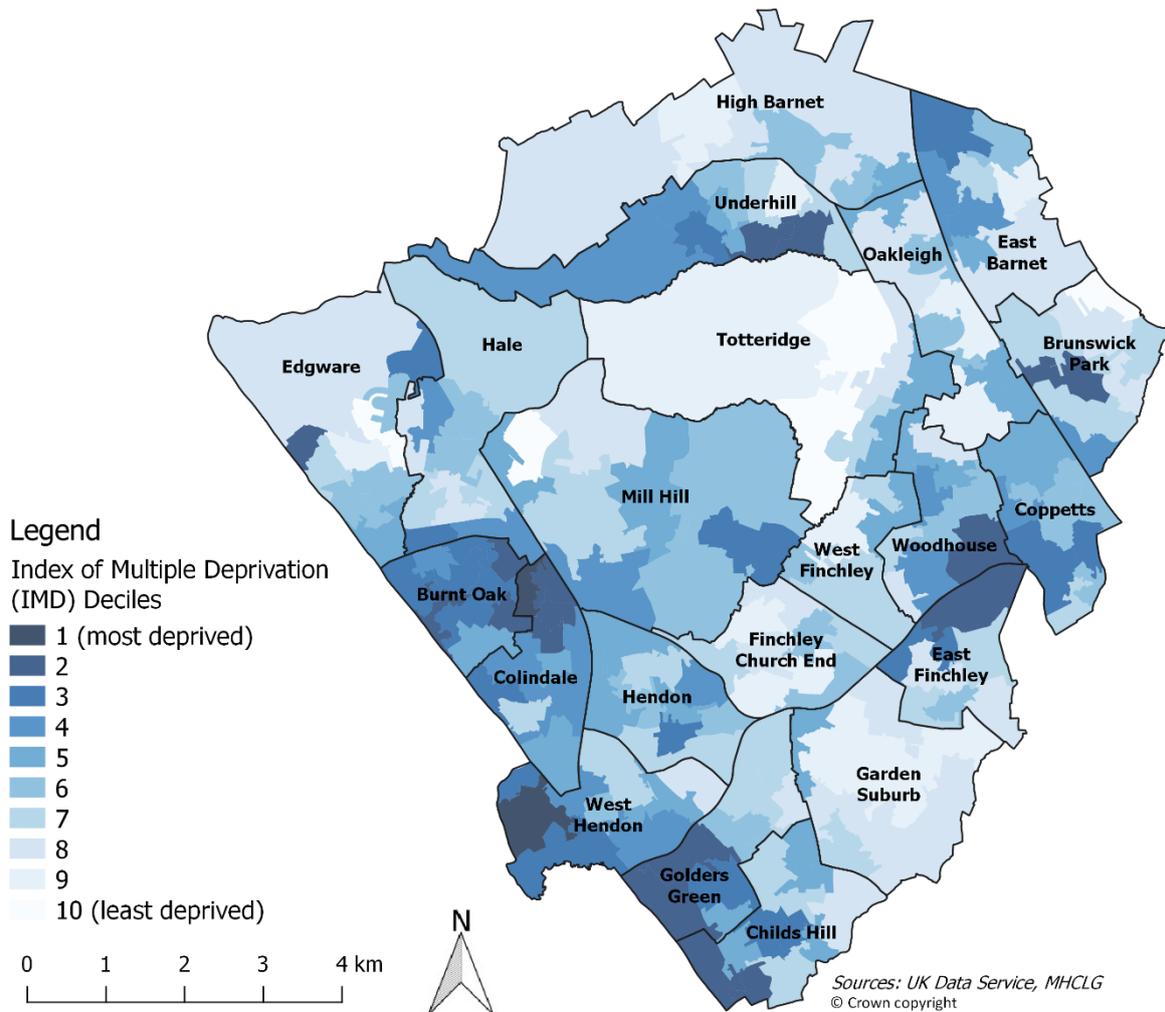
## 5. Life Chances needs assessment in Barnet

The full impact of COVID-19 on life chances across Barnet will take some time to emerge. The following sections set out the key information and data that is known at this stage from a range of sources.

### 5.1 Child poverty

Based on HMRC data, 14.0% of children in Barnet under the age of 16 were living in low income families in 2016, which was significantly lower than both London (18.8%) and England (17.0%). Within the local authorities in London, Barnet is ranked 25<sup>th</sup> on child poverty, using this measure. The latest research into child poverty shows Barnet has an Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD, 2015) score of 17.8, making it one of the least deprived boroughs in London. However, even in this relatively prosperous borough, there are pockets of deprivation, many of which are concentrated in the west and south of the Borough. See Figure 2

Figure 2. Barnet Income Deprivations Map



For Barnet, during 2017/18, the highest proportion of children living in poverty (after housing costs are considered) was found in Colindale (50%) and the lowest in High Barnet (23%), during the same period.

This disparity in the proportions of children living in poverty between different wards in the borough has important implications for health and wellbeing as well as service provision. The impact of Covid-19 on low income families with children is likely to be severe in the short term and recovery for these families will take much longer.

## 5.2 Food Security

As the impact of Covid-19 continues to take effect, food banks in the Trussell Trust's network reported an 89% increase in emergency food parcels given to people across the UK in April 2020 compared to the same period in 2019.<sup>7</sup> The figures include a 107% increase in parcels going to children compared to last year. The number of families with children receiving parcels has almost doubled compared to the same period last year.

Independent food banks saw similar increases, with the Independent Food Aid Network reporting a 175% increase in need for emergency food parcels given out in the UK during April 2020 compared to the same month last year.

A YouGov poll, commissioned by the Food Foundation, showed that:

- More than 1.5 million adults in Great Britain now report that they are unable to obtain the food they need and that nearly half (44%) of people surveyed are worried about getting the food they need as a result of coronavirus.
- People with children aged 8 to 16 in their household are more worried about getting food (52%) compared with those with no children (40%)
- People with children are more worried about getting fruit and veg (50%) compared with those with no children (42%)

From April to June 2020, Barnet's Community Help Hub answered 3,513 urgent phone calls and 2,846 emails asking for help. Its website received 12,565 unique visits.

In January 2018, Barnet received funding from the GLA to develop a food security action plan. Working with the Voluntary Community Sector, research partners at UCL and London School of Hygiene and Tropical medicine, the final plan was signed off at Health and Wellbeing Board in October 2019. COVID-19 and the resulting lockdown has slowed progress on the original plan significantly, however it has also united partners in the fight against food poverty, highlighting the urgent need for support.

Work has begun with researchers at UCL to better understand how COVID-19 impacted the landscape around food bank use as a result of COVID-19 in Barnet. The project will last 12 months but will provide a much needed in depth understanding of food poverty in the borough. The food

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.trusselltrust.org/2020/06/03/food-banks-busiest-month/>

security working group will also be relaunching in October 2020 to review the existing action plan and to develop a new fit-for-purpose plan, building on the work done during lockdown.

### 5.3 Mental Health

The COVID-19 episode has had substantial negative impacts on mental health across the UK population. The biggest impacts have been on the same groups, broadly women and the young, that already had relatively low levels of mental health. Pre-existing inequalities in mental health have therefore been exacerbated by the crisis.

Our local survey of young people revealed 40% of young people felt the crisis had affected their mental health and well-being. There has been an increase in mild to moderate mental health presentations to our Barnet Integrated Clinical Service (BICS). BICS is the main provider of mild to moderate mental health services for children and young people (CYP) and families across Barnet. Additionally, increase in anxiety related presentations to KOOOTH (the council commissioned online counselling service), has reported a 25% increase in demand. BICS has set up support help lines for CYP, families and professionals between 9am to 8pm. This was in response to schools closing and families finding it harder to access to GPs. These support line were set up for easier access to BICS, support and help signposting to relevant services in the borough. BICS has provided innovation through digitally offering podcasts and pre-recorded videos as resource tools for the Barnet community and agency networks, and are delivering wide range of workshops and groups as part of an extension to their business as usual clinical offer which will continue. This has been well received by both families and wider agencies. Moreover, BICS has been an integral part of the Back to School Campaign and general COVID response.

BICS sits within the 'getting advice' and 'getting help' part of the Thrive model. According to the NHS Long Term Plan (2019)<sup>8</sup>, half of all mental health problems are established by the age 14, while the government's Green Paper on transforming CYP MH<sup>9</sup> suggests that one in ten young people have some form of diagnosable mental health difficulty. Therefore, BICS provides the much-needed stepped care approach to support prevention of specialist CAMHS provision and CYP going into crisis. Thus, the Barnet community benefiting from whole system approach.

A total of 838 referrals were made to BICS in the 12 months from September 2019 to August 2020 inclusive, with a 91.0% referral acceptance rate. 46.1% of 4,000 appointments offered during this period were conducted face-to-face (53.9% not face-to-face) – a figure heavily skewed by the impact of the government's pandemic response. A blended approach of remote working and face-to-face to work was offered through the pandemic, thus the average did-not attend (DNA) rate was only 2.1% of all appointments. High appreciation of the blend of face-to-face and digital offer based on clinical need was received.

In addition, Specialist CAMHS established a 24-hour Mental Health Crisis Line as part of their response to the pandemic. Working as part of the North Central London (Camden, Islington, Enfield, Barnet and Haringey) partnership, BEH MHT delivered specialist mental health hubs. The partnership also increased the capacity in the mental health crisis out-of-hours provision.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.longtermplan.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/nhs-long-term-plan-version-1.2.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/664855/Transforming\\_children\\_and\\_young\\_people\\_s\\_mental\\_health\\_provision.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/664855/Transforming_children_and_young_people_s_mental_health_provision.pdf)

In line with other mental health trusts across the country, in the two weeks after the lockdown in March 2020 began, routine referrals to specialist mental health services reduced then increased and stabilised in July 2020. Although routine referrals reduced, CAMHS activity increased due to contacts with children and young people on CAMHS cases in this period, including telephone appointments and “Attend Anywhere” video conferencing sessions.

In Barnet, for 2018, the percentage of school age pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs was 2.61% which is higher than both London 2.41% and England 2.39% respectively. The percentage of primary school and secondary school pupils in the borough with social, emotional and mental health needs are also higher than the national average, in each case<sup>10</sup>. The hospital admissions due to self-harm for 10-24-year olds in Barnet have also been higher than London, since 2015/16.

## 5.4 Education

Barnet is well known for the excellent quality of its schools and the diversity of its educational offer. Our excellent educational outcomes and ensuring that all children and young people are resilient and equipped to meet the needs of employers are key factors for life chances. Education performance, including for disadvantaged pupils, has consistently improved over the last five years:

- The percentage of Good and Outstanding schools in Barnet is now 96.8% and is in the top 10% of the country.
- School attendance has consistently improved and Barnet is now in top 20% of Local authorities nationally for primary and the top 10% for the secondary phases.
- End of Key Stage 1 attainment in Reading, Writing and Maths is in the top 10% nationally.
- End of Key Stage 2 attainment in Reading, GPS and Maths and RWM combined is in the top 10% nationally.
- At Key Stage 2 the attainment of disadvantaged pupils is in the top 10% for Reading, Writing and Mathematics combined.
- AT Key Stage 2 Barnet is in the top 10% of local authorities for the progress disadvantaged pupils make in Maths and Reading.
- End of Key Stage 4 GCSE attainment (Attainment 8) is in the top 5% nationally for all pupils (2nd) and for disadvantaged pupils (5th).
- At Key Stage 4 the average Progress 8 score is in the top 5% of LAs nationally across all pupils (2nd) and for disadvantaged pupils (4th).
- In Progress 8 Barnet disadvantaged pupils are performing better than non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.
- End of Key Stage 5 A Level attainment is in the top 5% nationally.

As far as possible, the education focus throughout the pandemic has been on children continuing to learn. As children transitioned into school, the focus was on addressing concerns of lost learning. Barnet participated in a 6-borough project on lost learning<sup>11</sup> which is being used by schools to look at programmes in the autumn term.

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<sup>10</sup> Public Health England Fingertips. [Online] Available here: <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile-group/mental-health/profile/cypmh/data#page/0/gid/1938133090/pat/6/par/E12000007/ati/102/are/E09000003/cid/4/page-options/ovw-do>

<sup>11</sup> Supporting the futures of children’s and young people’s education and skills following COVID-19

With examinations cancelled the impact on education performance is as yet unknown. However, lost learning is likely to have impacted most on disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils, whereas some young people will have benefitted from virtual learning, exacerbating differences in achievement.

The effects of being out of the classroom and learning online were highlighted in our survey of school children. 68% felt being in school is important to get help from friends, 60% say their screen time increased playing games and the same percentage said not being in the classroom affects their ability to understand. Further analysis of the survey data revealed young people of Asian (67%) and Black origin (75%), with a disability (75%), were more likely to agree the pandemic is harming their long-term education.

### **Achievement of disadvantaged pupils**

Although the achievement of disadvantaged pupils is in the top 10% nationally, the North London Disproportionality Dataset shows, for 2019, the ratio of black pupils in Barnet attaining the expected standard at Key Stage 2 and 4 compared to white pupils is low and in some cases being the lowest or second lowest in North London. This dataset also shows that Barnet's pupil referral units have disproportionately high numbers of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds and school exclusions data shows that Black pupils are twice more likely to be excluded than white pupils.<sup>12</sup> Eliminating differences in the performance of groups of pupils remains a priority for improvement.

### **Special Educational Needs**

2.6% of Barnet's school population have an Education, Health and Care Plan, compared with the national proportion of 2.8%. In addition, 10.9% receive Special Educational Needs Support compared with 11.9% nationally. The largest groups of needs are, Autistic Spectrum Conditions and Speech, Language and Communication Needs<sup>13</sup>. Between them, they account for most children and young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan<sup>14</sup> (EHC Plan). SEND is disproportionately prevalent within the Black and Black British community. 4.5% of Black children and young people will have an Education, Health and Care Plan, compared to 2.6% across the entire population of children and young people.

The quality of our educational provision for pupils with SEND is among the best in the country, with over 96% of Barnet schools graded good or outstanding by OfSTED, including all our special schools and every mainstream school with an Additional Resource Provision (ARP).

Educational attainment at Key Stage 2 for Reading, Writing and Maths combined is in the top 10% for children with SEN Support and narrowly outside the top 10% (19<sup>th</sup>) for children with an EHC Plan. Progress in Key Stage 2 is in the top 25% for Reading, Writing and Maths for pupils on SEN Support and with EHCPs. At Key Stage 4 Barnet ranks in the top 10% of LAs for both Attainment 8 and Progress 8 for pupils at SEN Support. For pupils with an EHC Plan, Barnet is narrowly outside the top 10% (19<sup>th</sup>) in attainment and below the top 10% but above the national average for Progress 8.

Attendance is above national and statistical neighbour averages for pupils with EHCPs and in the top 10% of local authorities for SEN support pupils in both primary and secondary phases. There have been no permanent exclusions of primary pupils at SEN support or any pupils with an EHCP for the

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<sup>12</sup> North London Disproportionality Dataset September 2020

<sup>13</sup> Joint Plan with Barnet CCG, Barnet Council, Cambridge Education and Barnet Parent Carer Forum (2017). Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Strategy. [Online] Available here: [https://www.barnet.gov.uk/sites/default/files/appendix\\_a\\_send\\_strategy\\_2017-2020.pdf](https://www.barnet.gov.uk/sites/default/files/appendix_a_send_strategy_2017-2020.pdf)

last three years for which data is available (up to 2017/18). The percentage of permanent exclusions of SEN support pupils has fluctuated but was below the national average in 2017/18. 96% of 16- to 17-year-olds with special educational needs are in education or training, compared to the national figure of 89%.

There is growing evidence of the significant impact that the Covid-19 pandemic has had on children and young people with SEND and their families. A study undertaken between 22<sup>nd</sup> March and 1<sup>st</sup> April involving 241 families of children with SEND, found that nearly half of the parents reported experiencing greater anxiety, concern for their child's future and fears of them failing even further behind their peers (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, NICE, 2020).

In Barnet, the 0-25 Disabilities Service assessed the safeguarding risk and need based on disability of every child. Visits continued, the majority of which were virtual but where essential face to face visits were completed. Social workers kept in touch with families throughout as little or no support could go into homes for months. Work was done with care providers to explore different ways to deliver support to prevent escalation of need.

In Barnet, a survey was undertaken with 700 young people with SEND about the impact of the pandemic for them. Key concerns have related to increased anxiety and other mental health needs resulting from the impact of 'lockdown' and uncertainty about the future, lost learning and the impact of the pandemic on access to further/higher education and employability.

In October Ofsted/Care Quality Commission undertook a SEND Assurance visit in Barnet and confirmed that services and providers had worked well together to support children and young people with SEND and their families. From our own learning, and the feedback from children, and young people, parents and schools in Barnet, we aim to build on what has worked well during the pandemic and identify any gaps or greater areas of need that have resulted from the pandemic.

### **Children in care & care leavers**

There was improved attainment and progress of Looked After Children in 2018. The Attainment 8 and Progress 8 scores for looked after children was better than national and London averages and statistical neighbour LAs.

At the end of December 2017, 96.04% of Barnet 16 & 17-year olds were in education or training, compared with 94.77% for its statistical neighbours and 92.01% for England. In 2017, Barnet was ranked 10th nationally on this indicator and had been consistently higher than both its statistical neighbours and England for several years.

Barnet's Virtual School was operational throughout the pandemic, adapting to new ways of working. At the start of the pandemic, tuition for all children was offered for two hours a week for four weeks to bridge the gap as schools got their online learning up and running and some children returned to school. Barnet Virtual School, in collaboration with Achieving for Children's Virtual School (Kingston, Richmond, Windsor and Maidenhead) and St Mary's University, has developed a Transition Hub for children in care aged 11 to 14. The project is to support young people who are new to care and children in care experiencing a transition in home/school placement within the care system.

For Barnet care leavers access to employment, training and education has worsened over the pandemic with an increase of 10% who are NEET resulting in 56% of care leavers being NEET. A

number of young people working in the hospitality sector became unemployed and young people turning 18 during this period were unable to commence their training.

## 5.5 Digital divide

COVID-19 is set to make the impacts of digital exclusion worse for the millions of young people affected, with the poorest hardest hit. Lockdown has highlighted reliance on virtual means of staying in touch. Critically, it has also thrown into focus the issue of digital exclusion, which has been a reality for 22% of the UK's population who lack basic digital skills since long before the Covid-19 outbreak according to a recent report<sup>15</sup>. At borough level, a 2017 survey indicated that Barnet has a low likelihood of digital exclusion, with only 11% of Barnet households having not been online., with low levels of connectivity seen around the north and centre of the borough.<sup>16</sup> As part of Barnet's COVID-19 emergency response, 700 computers were provided to support vulnerable children in the borough with their school work.

## 5.6 Housing

Following the Covid crisis, there has been an increase in number of care leavers waiting for permanent housing with 89 young people awaiting allocation of a property. There are various factors that have influenced this situation, namely the use of temporary accommodation for rough sleepers, the stay on evictions and the staying put guidance that stated that children should not be expected to move out of their placements at 18 during the lockdown.

Housing is an important determinant of our health, and it is essential for the wellbeing of children that their home provides for their needs, makes them feel safe, and allows them to stay connected to their community. The impact of housing on children's and young people's health is likely to have been greater than ever over the period of lockdown, with government guidance to stay at home and a significant number of households experiencing greater financial difficulties. The consequences of COVID-19 could increase housing insecurity, including unaffordability, short and unsustainable tenancies, and overcrowding.

Barnet's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-24<sup>17</sup> sets out its approach to tackling and preventing homelessness in Barnet, and noted that the most at-risk group of homelessness was single parents with dependent children.

## 5.7 Youth unemployment

The current crisis risks pushing more young people into unemployment and financial uncertainty. A recent study undertaken by the Institute of Fiscal Studies draws a correlation between the consequences of the crisis and the negative impact on employment for young people, with 16% of all people aged between 22 and 25 working in their first full time job after leaving education in the

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<sup>15</sup> [https://www.lloydsbank.com/assets/media/pdfs/banking\\_with\\_us/whats-happening/lb-consumer-digital-index-2019-report.pdf](https://www.lloydsbank.com/assets/media/pdfs/banking_with_us/whats-happening/lb-consumer-digital-index-2019-report.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> UK Tech Partnership, 2017. "UK Digital Exclusion Heatmap".  
<http://heatmap.thetechpartnership.com/?area=Barnet&metric=total>

<sup>17</sup> [https://www.barnet.gov.uk/sites/default/files/homelessness\\_strategy\\_2019-2024.pdf](https://www.barnet.gov.uk/sites/default/files/homelessness_strategy_2019-2024.pdf)

sectors hit hardest by the crisis<sup>18</sup>. Young people are most likely to have had their pay cut, with 35% earning less than they did at the start of the crisis and 9% earning more according to the Resolution Foundation.<sup>19</sup>

Covid-19 has also created difficulties for young apprentices. The group is suffering from both the employment crisis and with complications over the support they need to learn and progress. According to a report by the Children’s Commissioner <sup>20</sup>, 1 in 5 apprentices have been made redundant, are on a break from learning or have left their programmes. They are likely to be in sectors struggling due to the pandemic such as hospitality, retail and construction. Younger workers are also more like to be furloughed than older ones. In Barnet, negotiations have taken place with individual contractors and employers to secure or ringfence supported Internship opportunities. This is happening alongside work with training providers who have employment opportunities or work experience links. Commissioning has continued of Supported Internships programmes for young people with EHCP’s.

Increased unemployment of adult household members, and the associated financial uncertainty and risk to housing security will also have impact on children. Information released in July 2020 on numbers of people being furloughed at a constituency level in Barnet revealed Hendon as the worst affected (19,200 people; 9<sup>th</sup> out of 74 in London) followed by Finchley & Golders Green (16,100, 25<sup>th</sup>) and then Chipping Barnet (13,100, 41<sup>st</sup>). Table 2.

Table 2. Furlough in Barnet

<b>London</b>	1,074,900
Hendon	19,200
Finchley and Golders Green	16,100
Chipping Barnet	13,100

In July 2020 the number of working aged adults claiming work related benefits was 18,105 which has tripled since February 2020 (6,455). Young people are at significant risk of economic hardship with 18-24-year olds claiming benefits up from 2.5% in July 2019 to 9.5% in July 2020 and seventeen-year olds are more likely to be furloughed.

Young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) have been affected by COVID. Barnet’s Education Strategy (2017-2020)<sup>21</sup> notes that the number is low for 16-17 years old. Public Health England’s 16-17-year olds not in education, employment or training (NEET) or whose activity is not known in Barnet is 140 (1.9%) lower than London (4.8%) and England (5.5%)<sup>22</sup>. At the start of lockdown, the NEET figures for Care Leavers indicated that 39% of young people were not in

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/14914>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/young-workers-in-the-coronavirus-crisis/>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/cco-what-covid-19-means-for-young-apprentices.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> Barnet Education Strategy 2017-2020. [Online]. Available here:

[https://www.barnet.gov.uk/sites/default/files/barnet\\_education\\_strategy\\_2017\\_to\\_2020\\_.pdf](https://www.barnet.gov.uk/sites/default/files/barnet_education_strategy_2017_to_2020_.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> Public Health England, Fingertips. [Online] Available here: <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/child-health-profiles/data#page/1/qid/1938133228/pat/6/par/E12000007/ati/102/are/E09000003/iid/93203/age/174/sex/4/cid/4>

education, employment or training, compared to 36% in March 2019. As lockdown restrictions ended, this increased to 49% compared to 45% in June 2019.

## 5.8 Domestic abuse

A surge in domestic violence has been reported during Covid-19 pandemic as those living with domestic violence face greater risks at home during lock down, and support services are harder to reach. Statistics revealed that domestic violence increased since lockdown began in March 2020 with the charity, Refuge, reporting a 700% increase in calls to its helpline in a single day<sup>23</sup>.

Between April 2017 and April 2019, there were 5,708 domestic abuse (hate crime) offences recorded by the Metropolitan Police in Barnet. In the 12 months to April 2019, the number of these offences recorded for the borough was 12.75% higher than the previous 12 months, compared to 11.17% for London overall

## 5.8 Crime

Barnet's Young People's Perception Survey conducted in November 2019 showed crime (53%) remains the top concern among young people. Knife crime is the top personal worry (71%) with gangs (52%) and people taking drugs the other key worries.

The Barnet Youth Justice Plan 2018-20<sup>24</sup> using data from the YJB for First Time Entrants (taken from PNC) shows a 25% reduction in First Time Entrants to the Youth Justice system, dropping from 293 in the period between January to December 2016, to 218 from January to December 2017. Furthermore, the information from the YJB shows that the rate of custody (young people sentenced per 100,000 of the youth population) has increased marginally (0.28 for the period April 2017 – March 2018 compared with 0.22 from April 2016 – March 2017). This is on a par with statistical neighbours, and the rate of change between the two periods. Barnet's custody rate continues to be lower than the national rate.

The Youth Justice Plan highlights the complexity of youth crime in the Borough seen through increasing numbers of young people who are assessed as being gang affected. In 2016/17 this was 32% of the caseload with a risk to 49% by 2017/18. The vulnerability of this group is evidenced by the fact that 40-45% had contact with social care in some form.

## 5.9 Vulnerable children

Apart from the financial stresses affecting families, there are other issues being amplified by the crisis. Although children face less risk of Covid-19, vulnerable children face a mixture of additional risks with families becoming destabilised at the same time as support structures such as schools, clinics, health visitors and children's services suffered restrictions to the support on offer.

The Multi-Agency Early Help Panels have continued to operate remotely with good attendance from all key agencies. In partnership with key local providers, schools and the VCS, a summer programme of activities was developed building on the virtual delivery that was developed at the start of

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<sup>23</sup> <https://www.refuge.org.uk/refuge-sees-700-increase-in-website-visits/>

<sup>24</sup> Barnet Youth Justice Plan 2018-20 [https://www.barnet.gov.uk/sites/default/files/youth\\_justice\\_plan\\_-\\_update\\_august\\_2019\\_-\\_web.pdf](https://www.barnet.gov.uk/sites/default/files/youth_justice_plan_-_update_august_2019_-_web.pdf)

lockdown. Early Help staff have delivered face to face and on-line programmes of activity with interactive, live and pre-recorded sessions in place.

Between March and September as services ceased operating or moved to remote ways of working there is evidence that this impacted on the volume of referrals into the MASH which were lower than usual, with 7891 contacts between March and September 2020, which was lower (<770) than the 8661 reported in the same period in 2019. As lockdown restrictions eased there was a moderate increase in contacts from a range of agencies.

The Duty and Assessment Teams worked on rota to undertake assessment and 96% of children were reported to have been seen during assessments over the period March – September. Visits were face to face throughout the pandemic with staff using PPE as necessary. Face to face visits were prioritised to those perceived to be at the greatest risk at home. Child protection processes remained in place virtually over the lockdown period with Strategy Discussions and S47 enquiries taking place virtually. Children were seen alone and interviewed.

Young people at risk of criminal and sexual exploitation and/or gangs and serious youth violence have received virtual support during the lockdown period via the Trusted Relationships Project (Art Against Knives, MAC-UK and Growing Against Violence). The REACH team has continued to undertake face to face visits to children and young people, whilst incidents of exploitation, missing episodes and serious youth violence practically diminished over the lockdown period, there have been increases across all domains of risk since the restrictions were eased. The Vulnerable Adolescents Strategy 2020 – 2022 sets out the key priorities for the multi-agency partnership in tackling vulnerability to exploitation.

### **Children with Learning Disabilities and Physical Disabilities**

Children with disabilities have been identified as an exception to the low risk group profile. Complex health needs have resulted in disabled children being 'shielded' with limited, if any, access to outdoor space including school. Despite some school places being made available, parental anxiety has affected take up. The concept of 'social distancing' is not always understood by children with disabilities and this has added additional challenges for schools.

It is acknowledged that the lack of access to therapies, health services and education particularly for those with significant and complex learning needs may have caused regression in physical mobility, emotional wellbeing and learning. As part of recovery of service provision children's needs will need to be carefully assessed to establish need and decide on what support is required. This will be addressed through the Barnet SEND Strategy 2021-2024.

During lockdown, the Open spaces scheme enabled families with children with autism and learning disabilities to access a safe space to play and enjoy a change in environment. Around 100 families have accessed this to date. Given that the evaluations have been so positive, this scheme has been extended at weekends and will continue into 2021. In addition, further development of the scheme will provide indoor learning activities for clinically extremely vulnerable children and young people who have significant learning needs and who may not be able to access some of the online learning activities.

## **Children in Care and Care Leavers**

At the start of the Covid-19 crisis, there were 322 Children in Care, including 64 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children and 340 Care Leavers. Throughout the period between March and September 57 children came into care, and a decision was made that no young people turning 18 would be considered to have left care, ensuring they remained supported by their social workers.

Young adults turning 18 were also supported to remain in their accommodation with their foster carers and supported semi-independent provisions to ensure young people did not experience significant life changing events during the lockdown period.

Placement stability is essential for children who are in care's wellbeing. 63% of children in our care live with foster carers. Foster carers showed admirable resilience and strength during lockdown and there is evidence of improved relationships, calming of challenging behaviours and for some children home learning has been a better experience than being in school environment. 67% of children in care have remained in their first placement and 89% of children have had 2 placements during their time in care.

The addressing of health needs for children in care has been impacted by COVID-19 as health assessments and reviews were completed virtually. The capacity of GP's to complete assessments reduced the timeliness of assessments with only 87% of assessment being completed on time. With dentist surgeries remaining closed for an extended period, only 37% of children were able to have their dental checks. This impact is being address by the Looked After Children Health Team. GP capacity is being increased and dentist surgeries have been directed to prioritise appointments for children in care.

## **6 Revised Action Plan 2020-2024**

A renewed commitment to successful outcomes for children, young people and families in the borough is shared by all services across Barnet. With the impact of COVID-19 and financial spending falling, there is a 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.

We recognise to improve life chances and address the issues previously outlined including child poverty and its contributing factors, there is no single response that will succeed on its own. Services need to work even closer together on a whole family basis in order to drive improved outcomes and wellbeing for children living in poverty. All interventions must consider targeted communications campaigns as a primary tool for raising awareness and driving behaviour change. Evidence suggests that single agency responses are unlikely to affect the change a child and family requires to succeed and escape deep-rooted poverty.

It has been agreed to retain the existing priorities but to further enhance the associated actions, in light of the impacts of COVID-19, to improve life chances for children and young people in the borough. The actions outlined are high level service priorities and further detailed information on respective strategies can be found in the appendix.

## Priority 1: Strengthening families and early years

Action	By whom
Deliver more initiatives through Children's Centres in the 0-19 Early Help hubs including access to training and employment opportunities, through a blended delivery model.	Early Years
Proactive publicising and enabling of increased access to 30-hours and Free Entitlement to Education (FEE2) offer. The 30-hour offer eligibility was extended during Covid-19 and it was agreed this additional eligibility will continue.	Early Years
Introduce termly parenting programmes to run across the borough with more 0-19 staff trained in specific parenting programmes including Strengthening Families.	Early Years
Increase use of 0-19 hubs as venues that distribute food bank vouchers and work with the Voluntary sector around the Holiday Hunger Scheme - including further work to define and target, without stigmatising, those suffering.	Public Health
Maintain the health visitor offer to deliver the five mandated reviews universally – antenatal, new birth, 6 – 8 weeks, 9 – 12 month and 2 – 2 ½ years. This has remained the priority during Covid-19 as reviews have been adapted to be delivered online.	Public Health
Work with partners to deliver Barnet's Childhood Immunization Action to increase immunization uptake across all socioeconomic groups.	Public Health
Improve access to healthy food in early years by increasing the number of families accessing the Healthy Start vouchers and vitamins, including facilitating the roll out of the electronic scheme.	Public Health
Continue to lead work with partners to improve our perinatal mental health pathway for Barnet, including 1:1 support for vulnerable parents.	Public Health
Aim to maintain current health provision where possible, whilst continuing to refine the virtual offer to ensure access to health services.	Clinical Commissioning Group

## Priority 2: Developing resilience and improving education

Action	By whom
Work with schools to maximise the percentage that are good or outstanding.	Barnet Education & Learning Service
Work with schools and families in a supportive way to get attendance rates back to the levels they were at before schools were closed as a result of the pandemic.	Barnet Education & Learning Service BICS
Work to support schools regarding the impact on mental health and well-being of school closures and partial closures arising from covid19.	Barnet Education & Learning Service BICS
Continuing support to schools with their blended learning approaches, recognising that the approaches need to be both flexible and adaptable.	Barnet Education & Learning Service
Continuing to support schools in establishing reliable baseline data for pupils and ensuring the curriculum meets the needs of all the pupils and is diminishing the expected wider differences between groups of pupils.	Barnet Education & Learning Service
Support families so that they feel confident in safely returning their child to school and reducing the likelihood of them opting for Elective Home Education.	Barnet Education and Learning Service BICS

Work with schools to identify young people at risk of NEET and to provide them with additional support to help ensure they progress to education, employment or training.	Barnet Education & Learning Service BICS
Promote pathways into Further and Higher Education within Barnet and the wider region/sub-region, working with Education partners to ensure that courses are both attractive to young people and that they respond to future skills needs.	Business, Employment, Skills & Training
Challenge and support schools to make effective use of Pupil Premium funding for the benefit of pupils from low-income families.	Barnet Education & Learning Service
Accelerate progress of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils in order to diminish the difference between them and their peers.	Barnet Education & Learning Service
Improve the achievement and attendance of looked after children.	Barnet Education & Learning Service
Champion the educational achievements of pupils with SEND.	Barnet Education & Learning Service
Develop a programme of extra-curricular learning activities for children through libraries.	Libraries
Further expand the Resilient Schools Programme to 75% of schools in Barnet by 2021.	Public Health
Further expansion of the Healthy Schools and Healthy Early Years programmes, include a focus on healthy weight, physical activity, and sexual health.	Public Health
Continue to work with schools, our service providers, and other partners to deliver high quality health and healthy relationship education in line with the national curriculum.	Public Health
Work with schools and young people to improve physical activity levels for all children and young people in Barnet including supporting primary schools to implement 20 mins of extra daily physical activity.	Public Health
Continue to support children in care with enhanced Personal Education Plan (PEP) reviews with additional support and provision in place where needed.	Corporate Parenting
Building on the "Lost Learning report" commissioned by authorities in North London support schools and early years settings to provide evidence informed and appropriate curricula to support Children and Young People with complex needs to catch up.	Barnet Education & Learning Service
Ensure that regeneration projects promote community cohesion and that young people are involved throughout the whole project. A borough-wide approach to growth and development will be taken.	Growth & Development
Delivery of social infrastructure to support housing, such as investments in schools, community facilities, health and leisure provision, open spaces and spaces for play, alongside opportunities to improve health and wellbeing and apprenticeships.	Growth & Development

### Priority 3: Delivering equal access to opportunities

Action	By whom
Ensure sufficient high-quality provision in borough for children and young people 0-25 years with complex needs, including Autism.	0-25 Disability Service
Support the uptake of nutritious free school meals and healthy start vouchers as part of Food Security Action Plan.	Public Health
Seek opportunities to support at-risk children to access nutritious food 365 days a year to minimise the health impacts of chronic food insecurity.	Public Health

Roll out and promote programmes for work experience, apprenticeships, training, volunteering, and paid employment including supported opportunities for people with SEND.	Post-16/SEND
Improve access to careers education, employment opportunities and ongoing mentoring support for people in poverty by co-locating and better coordination of services.	Post-16/NEET
Extend the innovative 'Open Spaces' project to provide families with safe access to swimming/leisure facilities and explore with families of Children and Young People with significant learning needs ways to support their education/development.	Barnet Education and Learning Service/0 – 25 Disability Service
Maintain high performance on timeliness and quality of EHCPs and ensure that where advice for new EHCPs has been provided virtually, an early review is undertaken to make sure that the Plan accurately reflects the needs of child and the provision required.	Barnet Education and Learning Service
Formalise a blended approach to working with children and young people with SEND, to include when a face-to-face assessment or intervention needs to take place; or when families are digitally or otherwise isolated.	Barnet Education and Learning Service
Building on a strong culture of partnership working ensure that front-line practitioners utilise the opportunities presented through technology to enhance information sharing about children and young people with SEND, co-producing with families.	Barnet Education and Learning Service
Building on a strong culture of partnership working ensure that front-line practitioners utilise the opportunities presented through technology to enhance information sharing about children and young people with SEND, co-producing with families.	Barnet Education and Learning Service

#### Priority 4: Targeting support

Action	By whom
Food security working group relaunching in October 2020 to review the existing action plan and to develop a new fit-for-purpose plan.	Public Health
Work underway with researchers at UCL to better understand how COVID-19 impacted the landscape around food bank use as a result of COVID-19 in Barnet.	Public Health
Ensure care leavers have access to food education as identified in the Food Security Action Plan. Actively seek out additional funding opportunities to enable the provision of budget cooking skills.	Public Health
Collaborate with voluntary sector to set up Holiday Health programmes in the borough.	Public Health
Provide specialist employment and training support for young people aged 18 plus who are NEET or are unknowns in Barnet, targeting males particularly from White British and Black heritage who are over represented as not in work or education.	Post-16/NEET
Work with S106 Team to identify apprenticeships and work opportunities. Ring fence opportunities for the hard to reach groups in Barnet.	Post-16/NEET
Continue the Care Leaver Programme to ensure care leavers are fully supported to move into sustained employment, education and training.	Post-16/NEET
Implementation of Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy providing support to prevent young people becoming homeless and rough sleeping.	Barnet Homes
Strengthening support for homeless families in temporary accommodation and increasing the supply of all forms of private and affordable housing available across the borough.	Barnet Homes

Increase focus on early intervention and homelessness prevention measures, such as tenancy sustainment, youth domestic abuse support services.	<b>Barnet Homes</b>
Continue to embed Mental Health Support Teams and voluntary sector projects within Barnet for children and young people with mild to moderate mental health needs ensuring a robust and consistent approach.	<b>BICS</b>
Implement new Mental Health Support Team for Barnet focused on vulnerable adolescents and children and young people with SEND.	<b>BICS</b>
Continue to embed the Barnet Integrated Clinical Service, which offers social, emotional, behavioural and mild to moderate mental health support to children, young people and families	<b>BICS</b>
Work to increase take up of the Reading Well mental health scheme for young people.	<b>Libraries</b>
Develop further targeted work to promote all prevention and Early Help services and expand access routes for our local services to enable more self-referral.	<b>Early Years</b>
Ensure children in care and care leavers are appropriately prepared and supported to live independently. Develop Moving Forward project where semi-independent living is experienced and target support received.	<b>Corporate Parenting</b>
Improve multi-agency working between housing and partners to ensure care leavers at risk of homelessness are identified early and appropriate action taken to improve their outcomes.	<b>Barnet Homes</b>
Continue to provide council tax exemption to support care leavers to live independently.	<b>Barnet Homes</b>
Introduce post diagnostic workshops for children with Autism, which help parent-carers to have a better understanding of their child's needs and what support is available.	<b>Barnet Education and Learning Service/0-25 Disability Service/Clinical Commissioning Group</b>
Support families of children with SEND to have a better understanding of their financial entitlements and rights.	<b>Barnet Education and Learning Service/0- 25 Disability Service</b>
Increase the accommodation choices, employment, training and leisure opportunities for children, young people with special educational needs and disabilities and their families to make successful transitions to adulthood.	<b>0-25 Disability service</b>
Targeted outreach for those most vulnerable to anti-social and criminal activity, educating them about avoiding and managing risks, and instilling confidence to address their fears and perceptions of threats.	<b>Family Services BICS</b>
Upgrade free digital provision in libraries, replacing all public access PCs including those for children and young people. Work with partners to increase the number of digital skills support sessions delivered through libraries.	<b>Libraries</b>
Build on strong parental engagement to formalise our outreach function for families, including those most isolated, so that there is effective communication and a dedicated SEN 'link' contact person for families of Children and Young People with complex needs to help ensure equality of access through the provision of information and signposting to other teams/services.	<b>Barnet Education and Learning Service</b>

## **APPENDIX**

<b>Barnet Council Young Persons Survey (February 2020)</b>	<a href="https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s60185/Appendix%201%20-%20Barnet%20YPS%202019%20Presentation.pdf">https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s60185/Appendix%201%20-%20Barnet%20YPS%202019%20Presentation.pdf</a>
<b>COVID-19 Young People Online Survey (July 2020)</b>	<a href="https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s60186/Appendix%202%20-%20COVID-19%20Young%20People%20Online%20Survey.pdf">https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s60186/Appendix%202%20-%20COVID-19%20Young%20People%20Online%20Survey.pdf</a>
<b>Autism Plan</b>	<a href="https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s59883/Autism%20Plan%20Report.pdf">https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s59883/Autism%20Plan%20Report.pdf</a>
<b>A Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2015 – 2020</b>	<a href="https://www.barnet.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/health-and-wellbeing-key-documents/joint-health-and-wellbeing-strategy-2015">https://www.barnet.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/health-and-wellbeing-key-documents/joint-health-and-wellbeing-strategy-2015</a>
<b>Education Strategy 2021 to 2024</b>	<a href="https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s60974/CPB%209.11.20%20-%20Education%20Strategy%20cover%20report%20-%202029.10.20.pdf">https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s60974/CPB%209.11.20%20-%20Education%20Strategy%20cover%20report%20-%202029.10.20.pdf</a>
<b>Draft SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2021 to 2024</b>	<a href="https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s60965/CPB%209.11.20%20-%20SEND%20Strategy%20cover%20report%2029.10.20.pdf">https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s60965/CPB%209.11.20%20-%20SEND%20Strategy%20cover%20report%2029.10.20.pdf</a>
<b>Barnet Housing Strategy 2019 – 2024</b>	<a href="https://www.barnet.gov.uk/sites/default/files/housing_strategy_final1.pdf">https://www.barnet.gov.uk/sites/default/files/housing_strategy_final1.pdf</a>
<b>Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-2024</b>	<a href="https://www.barnet.gov.uk/sites/default/files/homelessness_strategy_2019-2024.pdf">https://www.barnet.gov.uk/sites/default/files/homelessness_strategy_2019-2024.pdf</a>