

	<p>Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee</p> <p>7 June 2021</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Title</p>	<p>Family Services Quarterly Update</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Report of</p>	<p>Chairman of the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Wards</p>	<p>All</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Status</p>	<p>Public</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Urgent</p>	<p>No</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Key</p>	<p>No</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Enclosures</p>	<p>Appendix 1 – ChAT Data Report</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Officer Contact Details</p>	<p>Chris Munday Executive Director for Children and Young People Chris.Munday@barnet.gov.uk</p>
<p>Summary</p>	
<p>This report gives an update on Family Services progress against key areas and asks Members to note and scrutinise performance data, that can be found in Appendix 1.</p>	

<p>Officer Recommendations</p>
<p>1. That the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee is asked to note and provide comments on the performance information summarised in the report, and provided in Appendix 1.</p>

1 Family Services Update

Early Help and Children's Social Care

- 1.1 The current focus in Children's Social Care is on the capacity in the system following schools opening back to in-class teaching for children. We monitor data on a weekly basis including contacts, referrals and caseloads to ensure we are able to respond to changes in demand.
- 1.2 The ChAT data in appendix 1 shows a similar number of contacts into the MASH during April 2021 as in the previous month, and a slight increase in the number of open Early Help Assessments, from 1674 to 1731. This continues to illustrate a demand for lower level support for young people and their families around anxiety due to the lockdown and subsequent return to the classroom.
- 1.3 The lower than usual numbers of safeguarding referrals during the pandemic due, in the main, to children staying at home and a robust Early Help offer for those children who require some extra support, continues to impact on the levels of Child in Need and Child Protection Plans open to the service, as numbers are lower than usual. We have, however, seen an overall increase in the number of Strategy Discussions and child protection enquiries under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989. This is showing that the system is now identifying more child protection concerns which correlates with a rise in referrals from education.
- 1.4 Between March and April 2021 we have seen an increase in the number of new child protection plans from 74 to 96, and an overall increase in children on plans from 139 to 160. This again is reassuring as it shows the opening up of schools is helping us to identify children who need the support of a statutory intervention.

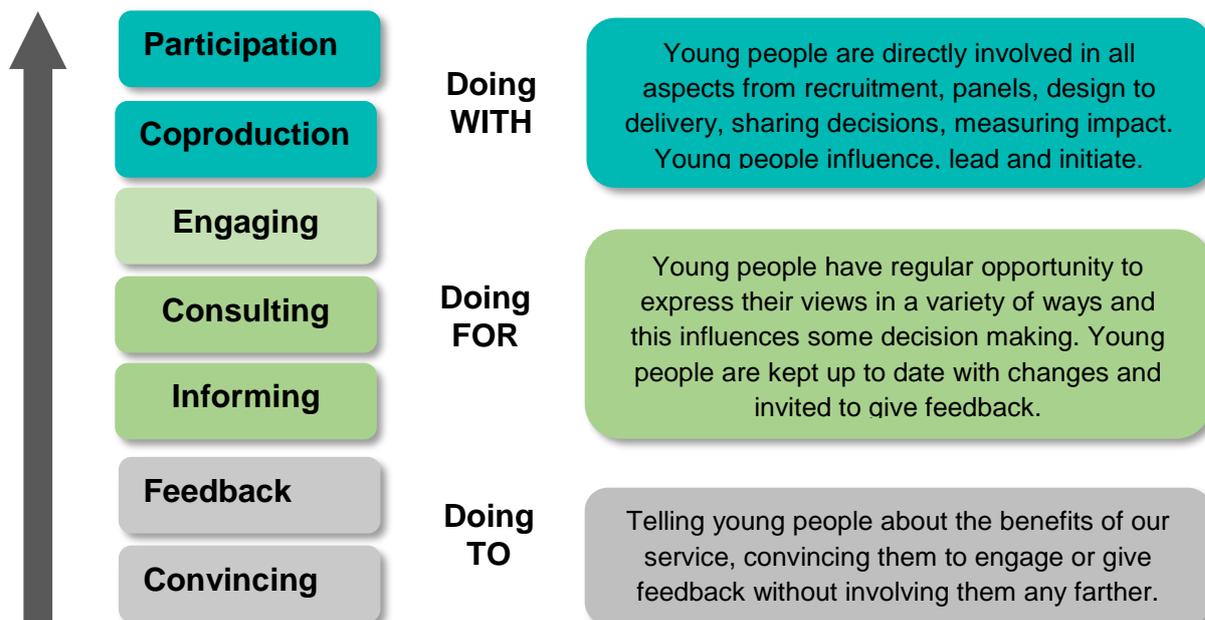
Children in care and care leavers

- 1.5 The number of children in care has increased slightly from 311 in March to 330 in April. We continue to receive referrals of unaccompanied asylum seeking children from the hotels run by the Home Office.
- 1.6 The Corporate Parenting Advisory Panel met on the 18th May and considered issues in relation to Housing and Education, Employment and Training for Care Leavers. A draft version of the new Corporate Parenting Strategy was also presented for feedback, which will be incorporated before coming to a future CES Committee Meeting.
- 1.7 The Panel ratified our 'Who We Place Where' strategic approach to placements of Children in Care and Care Leavers, which is centred on having a placement pathway that caters to all children, their different needs and that is outcomes focused:
 - We focus on supporting children and young people to maintain the secure and safe relationships that

- they have; strive for them to remain local to their home in Barnet where this is in their best interest and to support them to returning home where possible.
- We plan for alternative home options for children and young people where they are loved, kept safe and are encouraged to be the best they can be.
- We recognise that stable, resilient and supportive relationships with the adults around them is a key factor for improving outcomes for children and young people in all types of care arrangements
- When we plan for an alternative home, we focus on the needs of the child, the quality of the care and the outcomes that we are expecting that are in line with children and young people's best interest.
- We plan for the inevitable changes in need for every child, keep the care arrangement under review and ensure it provides best value.
- We think systemically about the alternative home for a child or young person, and the support that will enable them to thrive. For children and young people, their placement plan is linked in with education, employment and training opportunities alongside opportunities to engage with local communities and the voluntary sector to support them to achieve.
- We take a resilience based approach, with our independent living programme being an integrated part of all living arrangement for children who are 16 years and over, to support a successful transition to adulthood and autonomy

Feedback, Engagement and Child Participation

- 1.8 This report provides an update of the service user engagement and child participation activities taking place across Barnet Family Services and outlines the proposed development of this important workstream. Feedback, consultation, engagement, participation and co-production with children, young people and their parents or caregivers is critical to improving and developing practice and service delivery.
- 1.8.1 This diagram aims to highlight the distinctions between feedback, engagement and consultation as opposed to involved participation and authentic co-production:



1.8.2 Currently, the Family Services Workforce Development Team is mapping and collating child consultation, participation initiatives and service-user feedback so the individual workstreams can be coordinated, reviewed and analysed to inform a comprehensive and meaningful Feedback, Engagement and Participation Strategy.

1.8.3 There is a broad range of feedback, participation and engagement activities taking place across services but, these require stronger coordination and development to ensure that children, young people and their families see our efforts to engage them as purposeful and impactful. We wish to develop a more accountable process in which we demonstrate how we listen, change and develop in response to their feedback and efforts.

1.8.4 Two Child Participation Officers are in existence, one is linked to Children in Care services and the other is linked to Early Help services and three new roles have now been created. A Child Participation Officer is now embedded in Barnet's Integrated Clinical Service (BICS) and a Service User Involvement Practitioner is based in Onwards & Upwards, with a newly appointed Service Development Officer employed to support the overall workstream.

1.8.5 Furthermore, Listen Up and Coram (independent research providers) have been commissioned to collect feedback and experiences of our most marginalised children with both analysis and recommendations due at the end of June.

1.8.6 Key activities include:

- A bi-monthly Engagement & Participation Steering Group has been established to steer the workstream and develop the Feedback, Engagement and Participation Strategy.

- The implementation of the Peer Participation Network that meets fortnightly to reduce overlap, duplication, strengthen collaboration and track activities across the system
 - Supporting the “Listen Up Research” programme
 - Collaboration with Children’s Social Care, contact services, commissioning services, Early Help and Youth Offending Services to review the processes used to collect and analyse feedback
 - Developing and supporting creative initiatives/platforms that will amplify the voice of all children within Barnet, in particular those voice that are less frequently heard.
- 1.9 The key priorities of the workstream are divided between Onwards & Upward, Barnet Integrated Clinical Services, Early Help, Children in Care, and Statutory Children’s Services
- 1.9.1 The service user involvement practitioner based in Onwards & Upwards is facilitating groups for young people leaving care and providing consultations regarding transitions from Children in Care Teams to Onwards & Upwards. Key priorities in this service area are:
- Strengths & Resilience Group – These sessions were delivered virtually and explore issues facing young people leaving care with a focus on self-care and how to manage isolation. The group will be re-established face to face and new sessions will be co-produced depending on the needs of the YP’s.
 - Young Parents Group – For young expecting parents/ parents who are care experienced, this group offers further support and therapeutic guidance. Currently there have been two online sessions, these included introductions and general expectations as well as co-producing ideas for further sessions. The upcoming sessions are planned to be face- to- face
 - UASC GROUP/ Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Young People - This group is currently being developed by the Service User Involvement Practitioner with the intention to provide a safe space for young people to find others with similar experiences and be inspired by the progress of their peers.
- 1.9.2 The Youth Engagement Officer based in BICS has been established to empower and support the voice of young people receiving mental health support from BICS and develop projects resulting from needs identified. Key priorities are:
- Schools Group Sessions - The Mental Health Support Team (MHST) within BICS offer consultations, workshops, and support groups services to schools. These are aimed at students, parents/ carers and sometimes teachers.
 - Drop-in Services – This is currently in development with the aim to capture service requests from young people, who might not always be reflected in focus groups or at schools.

- Workshop Focus Group – This is a feedback group which aims to understand what has been working well with the workshops currently being offered, what would service users like to change / re-visit and also give BICS a space to authentically co-produce further workshops with parents and carers.
- Grahame Park Estate Girls Group - is aimed at helping girls within the Grahame Park area keep safe and have support with their emotional and mental wellbeing.

1.9.3 The Participation Officer based in Early Help/Universal services aims to empower and support the voice of young people receiving services from Barnet Family and Partnership Services to ensure we are responsive to their ideas and views and develop projects resulting from needs identified. Key priorities are:

- London Youth Assembly - Has 8-12 participants and has been working with GLA (Greater London Authority) and the YLPN (Young Londoners Participation Network) to increase the awareness of racism and inequality within schools and the curriculum.
- Youth Parliament - Focussed on ensuring that the issues affecting young people are shared nationally and are involved in an initiative to support minority communities.
- Children's Partnership Board - Brings together all the other initiatives and projects and allows all other participants to find out what is happening across all forums.

All active forums and boards referenced above require refreshed membership and a plan for face- to- face meetings/activities following the easing of lock down restrictions is been developed. This is a key priority and focus for the participation officer supporting universal services.

1.9.4 The Participation Officer based in Children in Care, also, aims to engage children and young people to actively participate in forums, activities and plans to support and improve the experiences of Barnet looked after children. Key priorities are:

- Children in Care Council – Barnet on Point (BOP) -Joined up working is underway to refresh and invigorate participation in the Children in Care Council. Incentives are being developed with children and young people alongside a refreshed website and communications for the workforce and young people outlining the offer and purpose of BOP. Direct work with children and young people to encourage their engagement is being undertaken.
- BOP will be re-launched in a face to face event planned on the 24th of June 2021.
- Barnet Inclusive Next Generation (BING) -Provides children and young people aged 11-25 with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities a space to share what is important to them and co-produce the services they use. This initiative would benefit from some support with participation and is a priority for the participation officers.

1.9.5 There are a number of ways in which young people are engaged in statutory services:

- Youth Offending Service & REACH have been undertaking participation activity as part of core service delivery alongside mentoring and youth engagement projects with a primary focus on young black boys who are disproportionately represented in their cohort. The YOS have co-produced White Board Project with young people which explains the journey through YOS from the young person's perspective, this is available on-line and has been shared as best practice with the Youth Justice Board.
- Young people and parents are routinely invited to participate in the YOT Management Board thereby giving them a voice to influence the multi-agency partnership
- MASH routinely contact families for feedback and are evaluating the quality of support.
- 0-19 Early Help Services invite feedback from families which they review with practitioners to shape service development and are actively working to involve parents and young people in Early Help Locality Advisory Boards
- Family Resource Centre collates feedback from children, young people and birth families about their experience of family contact and this feedback is used to improve service delivery.
- Quality Assurance Officers contact families as part of regular auditing activity and this feedback is outlined in quarterly audit reports and forms part of evaluating the quality of our service and the experiences of families we work with.
- Independent Reviewing Officers seek the views of children and young people about their experience of foster carer through Looked After Children's review meetings and have developed child participation events/workshops to coproduce the way reviews are held and minutes are delivered (i.e., they go in a form of a letter to the child).
- Fostering Support Service undertake annual reviews which incorporate the voice of the child as part of annual foster carer reviews.
- Commissioning, Insight and Strategy service seek the views of children and young people through surveys for Short Breaks and the Healthy Child Programme. They, also, encourage child participation by facilitating focus groups with children in care and have consulted with care leavers for the Corporate Parenting Strategy. Commissioners have attended secondary schools to gain feedback from young people on mental health support and use this to inform commissioning. Also, forums with parents and young people are held to assist with designing the new autism respite centre.
- Duty and Assessment and Intervention and Planning teams have developed a process for feedback and participation work by

contacting families weekly, and this feedback is collated and shared with the teams to reflect on practice.

1.10 As outlined above there is a significant amount of service user engagement and participation activity taking place across the service, with a wide range of platforms and fora for children and young people's voices to be heard and acted on. It is less evident how different service areas approach and engage children/young people and their families and how their views and feedback are having a direct and meaningful impact on service delivery, both in within Family Service and externally in universal and education settings.

1.10.1 We know it is crucial that young people and families feel their involvement is meaningful, and we continue to focus on enhanced collaboration and authentic co-production, not only within Family Service but also through external partnerships.

1.10.2 An overarching theme for all the feedback, participation and engagement initiatives outline is the focus required on engaging more children and young people with an explicit and intentional focus on equality, diversity and inclusion. By reaching and including as many young people as possible in their own meetings and plans, our recruitment activities, strategies and forward planning, we will be aiming to be building resilience and raising aspirations for all children and young people in Barnet.

2 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 Members are asked to consider and scrutinise the work of Children and Young People's Services, and to fulfil the council's statutory obligations in this regard.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED

Not applicable.

4 POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

Not applicable.

5 IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION

5.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance

5.1.1 Family Friendly is a key part of the Barnet Plan for 2021-2025 with the vision of "Creating a Family Friendly Barnet, enabling opportunities for our children and young people to achieve their best".

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

5.2.1 There are no additional financial implications arising directly from this report.

5.2.2 The majority of Medium Term Financial Savings for 2020-21 were delivered, with mitigations plans in place for savings targets that impacted by Covid-19 and/or other factors. Additional spend on Covid-19 and recovery is being tracked by the services.

5.3 Social Value

5.3.1 The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2013 requires people who commission public services to think about how they can also secure wider social, economic and environmental benefits. Before commencing a procurement process, commissioners should think about whether the services they are going to buy, or the way they are going to buy them, could secure these benefits for their area or stakeholders.

5.4 Legal and Constitutional References

5.4.1 Local authorities have specific duties in respect of children under various legislation including the Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004. They have a general duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need in their area and, if this is consistent with the child's safety and welfare, to promote the upbringing of such children by their families by providing services appropriate to the child's needs. They also have a duty to promote the upbringing of such children by their families, by providing services appropriate to the child's needs, provided this is consistent with the child's safety and welfare. They should do this in partnership with parents, in a way that is sensitive to the child's race, religion, culture and language and that, where practicable, takes account of the child's wishes and feelings. Under the Children and Families Act 2014, local authorities must consider how the child or young person can be supported to facilitate their development and to help them achieve the "best possible educational and other outcomes".

5.4.2 Local authorities have specific duties to care leavers under the Children Act 1989 as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017. The corporate parenting duties and powers under the 1989 Act include:

- to act in the best interests, and promote the physical and mental health and well-being, of those children and young people;
- to encourage those children and young people to express their views, wishes and feelings;
- to take into account the views, wishes and feelings of those children and young people;
- 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;
- to promote high aspirations, and seek to secure the best outcomes, for those children and young people;
- for those children and young people to be safe, and for stability in their home lives, relationships and education or work; and,
- to prepare those children and young people for adulthood and independent living.

5.4.3 The Council's Constitution, Article 7 notes that the Children, Education and Safeguarding Committee has 'Responsibility for all matters relating to children, schools and education.'

5.5 Risk Management

5.5.1 Specific risk management is being carried out for Children and Young People's Plan. Any Family Services risks are recorded on the Family Services Risk Register and monitored each quarter by the Senior Leadership Team with escalations to CMY if necessary.

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

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

5.6.3 Equalities and diversity considerations are a key element of social work practice. It is imperative that help and protection services for children and young are sensitive and responsive to age, disability, race and ethnicity, faith or belief, sex, gender reassignment, language, maternity / parental status and sexual orientation. We continue to closely monitor this, as report appendixes notes, in our performance data.

5.7 Corporate Parenting Principles

5.7.1 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.'

5.7.2 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.

5.8 Consultation and Engagement

- 5.8.1 Consultation and engagement with young people is central to social work practice and service improvement across Family Services. An overall Engagement and Participation strategy will be developed and co-produced in the next quarter following the collation of different workstreams. The strategy will outline how we embed our service user feedback and child participation into service delivery and development. Three new roles have been created to support consultation and engagement activity (a Service Development Officer and two Child Participation roles based in BICS and Onwards and Upwards) in Family Services. A full update has been provided in the earlier section on this paper.

5.9 Insight

- 5.9.1 Insight data will continue to be regularly collected and used in monitoring the progress and impact of the Children and Young People's Plan and to shape ongoing improvement activity. This report updates the Committee on our performance data.

6 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 6.1 None.