



Cabinet

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| Title | Children and Young People’s Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy Consultation |
| Date of meeting | 14 th November 2023 |
| Report of | Cabinet Member for Family Friendly Barnet - Councillor Pauline Coakley-Webb |
| Wards | All |
| Status | Public |
| Key | Non-Key |
| Urgent | No |
| Appendices | Appendix A – Draft Children and Young People’s Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2023-2027 |
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Summary

This document sets out the reasons why we are seeking to consult on the draft version of the Children and Young People’s Mental Health and Wellbeing strategy. This has been developed through our Children and Young People’s Mental Health and Wellbeing Partnership Board and involved engagement with young people in order to determine the barriers to accessing mental health and

wellbeing services, what help and support they need, and ultimately to determine our strategic direction around supporting Children and Young People’s mental health and wellbeing.

The mental health and wellbeing of children and young people can have a significant impact on a range of outcomes and can have far-reaching implications for both individual lives and the broader community if the right support at the right time and in the right place is not available. In light of this, it is imperative that we conduct a comprehensive and inclusive public consultation on the draft strategy. The aims of this consultation are to gather the views across a diverse group of young people to, establish clear priorities and goals, to be delivered through the strategy, and to develop our success measures, confirm our strategic direction and foster a collective commitment to the successful implementation of the strategy.

The insight gained through this strategy will also support in the delivery of the Children and Young People’s Plan 2023, specifically the sections of the plan relating to the health of children and young people. It is important that the delivery of strategies is informed by the most up-to-date insight, and the insight gathered here will support in the delivery of other plans and strategies within Family Services.

Recommendations

- 1. That Cabinet approve a public consultation to be conducted on the Children and Young People’s Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy.**
- 2. That Cabinet note the Draft Children and Young People’s Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2023-2027 (Appendix A).**

1. Reasons for the Recommendations

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Supporting children and young people to have positive mental health, as well as ensuring that young people who are at a high-level of need have effective, readily available and accessible support are the key priorities for the Barnet Children and Young People’s Mental Health and Wellbeing Partnership Board.
- 1.2 In many ways, we are still working through and remedying the mental health and wellbeing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children and young people. Impacts of this included isolation and loneliness, disruption of routine, uncertainty and anxiety, difficulty providing access to face to face mental health services and economic stress.
- 1.3 Compounding the above difficulties is the well-established relationship between deprivation and poor mental health and wellbeing. Mental health challenges associated with deprivation as co-morbidities include depression, suicidality, and general negative psychological well-being (Nurius et al., 2019). Additionally, poverty in childhood can drastically negatively impact cognitive ability and can lead to significant emotional problems, furthering their mental health concerns into adulthood (Moore et al., 2002).

- 1.4 Currently, Barnet has 10,942 young people in absolute low-income families and 13,288 in relative low-income families, with areas with the highest proportions of these young people being Colindale North, Burnt Oak and Cricklewood – all above the national average of 15.35% (absolute) and 18.67% (relative) respectively.
- 1.5 The current data around households vulnerable to cost-of-living increase suggests a similar picture, with these areas having the highest concentrations of vulnerable families and households. This highlights the need for a comprehensively considered strategy that focuses on place-based approaches for mental health and wellbeing support facilities and signposting.
- 1.6 Nationally, in children aged 7 to 16 years, rates of probable mental disorder rose from 1 in 9 (12.1%) in 2017 to 1 in 6 (16.7%) in 2020. Rates of probable mental disorder then remained stable between 2020, 2021 and 2022. This sustained increase has been in part, attributed to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 1.7 The national picture also suggests a difficulty in accessing appropriate mental health services relative to the level of need experienced by young people. In December 2021, a UK parliamentary Report reported that 60% of children and young people in need of mental health services were unable to access them.
- 1.8 In Barnet, the rate of child inpatient admissions for mental health conditions in 2020/21 was 68.7 per 100,000, which is lower than England as a whole, but higher than the regional average (JSNA).
- 1.9 We know that often children and young people are waiting too long for services and that as a system there is a need to address this and find solutions to enable swifter access and to provide wrap around support while waiting for an intervention.
- 1.10 The draft Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy aims to establish approaches that will ensure that Barnet's young people have the right support, at the right time in order to promote resilience and a healthy life.
- 1.11 The strategy makes use of the THRIVE model. This model details the different levels of need that a young person may experience, and the kinds of support that are appropriate at each level.
- 1.12 The aim of the THRIVE model is to keep as many young people mentally well and thriving, and to prevent escalation through the increasing levels of need, as well as to support young people on waiting lists for mental health services and those transitioning between services.

1.13 In our initial engagement with young people, it was found that there were four main barriers that Barnet's young people found in accessing mental health and wellbeing support:

- **Awareness**

Young people were not aware of the full breadth and availability of Barnet's mental health and wellbeing offers. They were also unaware of how they would go about accessing many of these services.

- **Perceptions**

Of the offers of support that young people were aware of, there was scepticism around their efficacy, as well as a sense that these services were promoted in ways that presented them as being overly formal and intimidating.

- **Trust**

Some young people expressed that they did not feel comfortable speaking with some professionals and practitioners, due to either previous experience or anecdotally from peers. Concerns were also raised with regard to confidentiality.

- **Cultural Barriers**

Amongst cohorts of young people who were accessing mental health and wellbeing services at proportionally low levels (including young people from the Jewish community, as well as black boys and girls) there was a prevailing sense that mental health and wellbeing professionals and practitioners were culturally far-removed from them, and therefore felt that they were less likely to be able to understand their concerns.

1.14 The draft strategy seeks to address these barriers through its priorities, which include:

2. Raising Awareness

This priority looks at ensuring that young people and their families are not only aware of the available support but are also aware of how to go about accessing this support. This involves targeted communications campaigns and young person-led and designed communications materials.

1. Engagement with Children, Young People and those with service-experience

In prioritising engagement with children, young people and those with service experience, the intention is to ensure that existing services as well as the development of new offers of support are comprehensively informed by the thoughts, feelings, ideas and feedback of children and young people, in order to tackle the existing barriers to accessing mental health and wellbeing support. Engagement with children and young people around mental health and wellbeing support will be guided by the Lundy Model, detailed within the My Say Matters Strategy (2022-2025).

2. Nearby and Relevant Support

By embedding mental health and wellbeing support within Barnet's communities, the intention is to ensure that the support is readily pragmatically accessible for all young people in the borough. The proposed use of existing community spaces and groups in which young people feel safe and comfortable, will offer young people the opportunity to get support and signposting from familiar adults and professionals who will be equipped with the tools and knowledge to support young members of the community.

3. Suicide Prevention

In prioritising suicide prevention within the Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy, it ensures that high-risk groups of young people are able to receive tailored approaches to their circumstances. It draws from the Barnet Suicide Prevention Framework, and therefore aligns with wider Public Health policy.

4. A system for success

The strategy's final priority looks at the development of conditions of success throughout the wider mental health and wellbeing system, to make sure that the mental health system and the professionals within it are sufficiently equipped to meet the mental health and wellbeing needs of Barnet's young people.

The strategy outlines the outcomes sought in prioritising each of these areas.

3. Consultation

- 1.15 A full public consultation on Barnet's Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy will support us in understanding the public perception of the strategy, the level of approval around our priorities and principles, as well as providing the insight to identify any gaps in mental health and wellbeing support not currently addressed within the document.
- 1.16 Such a consultation will also ensure that the strategy, from inception through its development and eventual publication is aligned with wider strategies and initiatives in Barnet.
- 1.17 For example, the Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2021-2025) highlights the need for greater responsibility across the system in engaging residents and the voluntary and community sector, as well as other partners in improving the overall wellbeing of residents.
- 1.18 The engagement with children and young people during this consultation also aligns closely with the My Say Matters Strategy (2022-2025), which looks at the ways in which the voices of children and young people can and should be used in the design and development of policies, strategies and services. Whilst we have already engaged with young people in the design of our draft priorities, this consultation will allow us to include the voices of even more young people, and also to address any changes in the needs and ideas of young people since our initial engagement.
- 1.19 The consultation will seek the views of:
 - Mental Health and Wellbeing Service users and clinical staff members, including focus groups through Barnet Integrated Clinical Services (BICS)

- Parents, through seeking the views of our Parent Champions and those of the Parent Carer Forum
- Children and young people, through focus groups at UNITAS, survey sessions during Barnet Active Creative Engaging Holidays sessions (BACE), and seeking the views of members of our Barnet Inclusive Next Generation (BING), Barnet on Point (BOP), The Youth Board, the Young Quality Assurance Group (Y-QAG)
- Colleagues throughout Family Services
- The wider public, through a survey hosted on Engage Barnet

4. Alternative Options Considered and Not Recommended

- 4.1 To proceed with requesting permission from Cabinet to publish Barnet’s Children and Young People’s Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy without consultation.
- 4.2 This would be inappropriate, as there is a need to make use of insight from residents, families and service users to ensure that the strategy is relevant and genuinely supportive.
- 4.3 Consulting also enables the development of the strategy to be in alignment with Barnet’s wider guidance around consultation, engagement and community participation.

5. Post Decision Implementation

- 5.1 Should the recommendation to consult be approved, the post decision implementation consists of arranging engagement sessions with the cohorts mentioned in section 2.5, as well as the writing and publishing of a survey to be hosted on Engage Barnet.
- 5.2 The consultation period will last between Monday 4th December 2023 - 15th January 2024, to ensure sufficient time both before and after the Christmas period, in order to gather as much insight as possible during the consultation period.

6. Corporate Priorities, Performance and Other Considerations

Corporate Plan

- 6.1 The strategy specifically supports the corporate plan’s aim of being a Family Friendly borough where children and young people have the best start in life with the right support and safeguarding when they need it, and the right tools to live their lives successfully into adulthood.
- 6.2 By consulting on this draft strategy, the aim is to ensure that the support and approaches proposed are the right support and tools for young people to achieve this.

6.3 The proposed consultation will also allow members of the community who have not yet been directly engaged with during the development of the strategy to provide feedback on how well the strategy addresses the Corporate Plan's aim to ensure residents are aware of and are able to access services and activities at the right time and in the way that is most suitable for them. It also ensures that we are able to deliver the aim of providing local solutions for local neighbourhoods based on the views of residents.

6.4 The corporate's plan highlighting of the need to engage in dialogue with families and communities in order to achieve its Family Friendly aims directly aligns with the need to consult families and communities on our Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

Corporate Performance / Outcome Measures

6.5 The proposed consultation supports in our corporate performance through being in alignment with the Community Participation strategy, and with the corporate guidance around engagement and consultation.

6.6 Specifically with regard to the principles set out within Barnet's Community Participation strategy, the proposed consultation will:

- Engage residents in the places they feel safe, comfortable and familiar, by offering focus groups in spaces such as UNITAS, with BACE providers and virtual focus groups where residents can engage from wherever they feel is most appropriate for them
- Seek the views of all our communities, particularly young people, minoritised groups and those less often heard
- Form part of our ongoing dialogue through the lifecycle of the strategy's development and the proposed services within it
- Promote transparency, openness and accessibility through encouraging participation in our strategy development

6.7 The consultation also explicitly supports in Barnet's vision to be a Family Friendly London Borough. It proposes to do this through ensuring that our strategic approach to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of Barnet's Children and Young people is sufficiently equipped to support young people and families in the ways that are most accessible, equitable and evidence-based.

6.8 Using insight gathered directly from the cohorts of Barnet's community that we seek to support through this strategy will ensure that it is as relevant as possible.

Sustainability

6.9 Not Applicable

Corporate Parenting

6.10 The strategy's implementation will directly support children and young people in our corporate care with complex mental health needs. By consulting our Children in Care Council (BOP), we

will be able to ensure that the thoughts, needs, feelings and voices of children in care directly inform the final draft of the strategy.

Risk Management

- 6.11 The risk associated with this consultation is a lack of engagement from young people, families, professionals and residents more widely.
- 6.12 In order to mitigate this, we will be offering a wide range of consultation mediums in order to cater to the availability and access needs of all residents to be consulted.

Insight

- 6.13 The proposed consultation is an exercise in ensuring data quality.
- 6.14 The insight gathered from this consultation will be made available to the wider mental health and wellbeing system via the Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing Partnership board and will inform the final draft of the strategy.

Social Value

- 6.15 Not applicable as this is not a proposal for the commissioning of a public service in accordance with the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2013.

7. Resource Implications (Finance and Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT and Property)

- 7.1 No costs or income relating to the proposed consultation are expected to impact any existing budget.

8. Legal Implications and Constitution References

- 8.1 The proposed consultation aligns with Section B of the Principles of Good Governance by encouraging and ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.
- 8.2 As stated in the final supporting principle in Section B, the proposed consultation follows the guidance set out within the Consultation & Engagement Strategy, in that we propose to engage with residents and organisations listed within section 6 of the strategy, and proposes to use the engagement mediums listed in section 7 of the strategy, including paper surveys, online surveys and focus groups.
- 8.3 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 of a child looked after by the local authority. The proposed consultation encompasses the duties within the Children Act by promoting a strategy which will in turn provide appropriate mental health and wellbeing provisions.

8.4 The proposed consultation also aligns with the Childcare Act 2006 duties namely to improve the wellbeing of young children in the area, and reduce inequalities between young children in their area in relation to the matters related to mental health and wellbeing which is what such consultation pertains to.

8.5 Under the Council's Constitution, Part 2D, the terms of reference of the Cabinet includes the following functions:

The Cabinet is responsible for the following functions:

- Development of proposals for the budget (including the capital and revenue budgets, the fixing of the Council Tax Base, and the level of Council Tax) and the financial strategy for the Council;
- Monitoring the implementation of the budget and financial strategy;
- Recommending major new policies (and amendments to existing policies) to the Council for approval as part of the Council's Policy Framework and implementing those approved by Council;
- Approving policies that are not part of the policy framework;
- Management of the Council's Capital Programme;

9. Consultation

9.1 This report is requesting permission to consult on the Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing strategy.

9.2 The details of the proposed consultation can be found in Section 2 above.

10. Equalities and Diversity

10.1 Section 149 Equality Act 2010 outlines the provisions of the Public-Sector Equalities Duty which requires Public Bodies to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
- advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups
- foster good relations between people from different groups. The broad purpose of this duty is to integrate considerations of equality into day business and keep them under review in decision making, the design of policies and the delivery of services. Equalities and diversity considerations are a key element of social work practice.

With regard to the protected characteristics as stated under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the proposed consultation has impacts in the below areas:

a) Age

Whilst the strategy is focused upon the mental health and wellbeing of 0-25 year olds, the consultation itself does not impact upon age as it is open to residents and partners

of all ages, with feedback sought from children and young people, service users, parents, families and professionals.

b) Disability

The mediums through which the proposed consultation seeks to gain feedback and insight from residents, partners and professionals within the mental health and wellbeing system will be made available in accessible formats, in accordance with Barnet's Accessibility Statement.

There have been no foreseen impacts upon the remaining protected characteristics, which include gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.

This consultation will enable collation of information and an Impact Equality assessment will be completed thereafter.

11. Background Papers

11.1 N/a