



CHILD PARTICIPATION AND FAMILY INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY

“
MY SAY
MATTERS
”

GETTING
OUR
MESSAGE
OUT

**Barnet Family
Feedback
Report**

June 2023

Caring for people, our places and the planet



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1. Introduction

Barnet Family Services is committed to seeking, listening to, and acting on feedback from the children, young people, and families we work with, we want to co-produce services and develop our delivery with children because their say matters to us.

When we co-produced and launched the My Say Matters: Child Participation and Family Involvement Strategy (MSM) in May 2022, we hoped it would provide the bedrock on which to build our engagement, participation and co-production activities with children, young people and their parents or caregivers. Over the last year, the bedrock has become a springboard with the energy, passion and commitment of the children and young people who have joined us on this journey and the relentless drive of the individuals and teams that have supported young people to get involved and have their say.

The dedication and tenacity of participation leads and practitioners to make sure our children and families can see the impact of their voices and views has contributed to our service developments, continuous learning and most importantly holding professionals to account for their service delivery. So, this annual report starts with a thank you to all the children and young people that got involved, taught us, led the work, designed the animations, bravely spoke up and out, made us laugh and dazzled us with their brilliance, we salute you!

This first annual report sets out the framework and processes for how we engage and involve children, young people, and their parents/carers. It highlights and shows a summary of the difference children's feedback has made to the way we do things in Family Services and sets out the themes arising and what we plan to do next.

2. You said, We Did

You said:

We want to be heard and listened to.

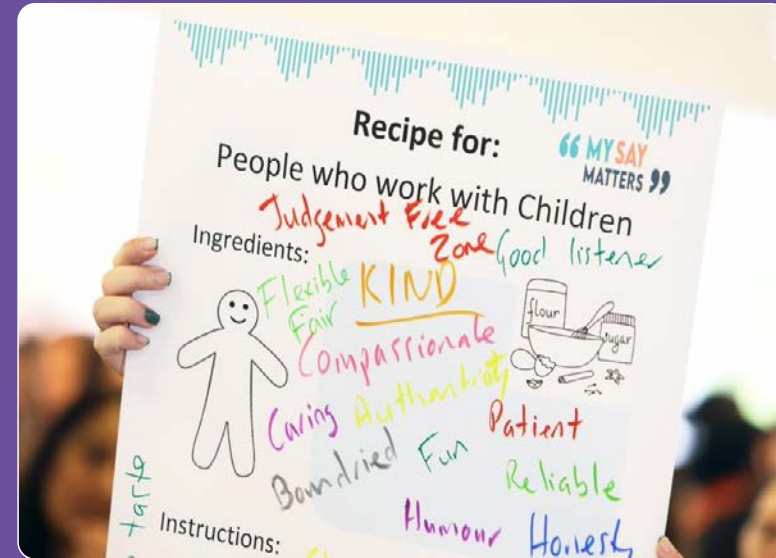
We did:

- Children have co-produced a digital family feedback form which has expanded the range of ways through which children and families can express their views.
- Children have co-produced a podcast to share key learning from the Family Feedback and Impact Report which is being disseminated across Family Services; a visual/subtitled format to accompany the podcast has been developed to use as a template for the ongoing development of this project.



We did:

- A child being supported through a Child in Need Plan shared their personal experience of having social worker(s) through an animated video presentation at the Annual Staff Conference in November 2022. He provided thoughtful reflections and valuable insights for practitioners with his recommendations on how social workers can effectively support children. Children’s workforce feedback highlighted the impact of the presentation, particularly when the child told us: “if you take the time to get to know me, I will take the time to listen to what you have to say”.
- Children and young people led an activity for the children’s workforce during the Annual Staff Conference, 2022. The activity was a table exercise in which a ‘recipe’ for an ideal practitioner who works with children was created, encompassing the necessary skills, qualities, and approaches for good practice. These values were incorporated into our refreshed Practice Framework.



Recipe for: 66 MY SAY MATTERS 99

People who work with Children

Ingredients:

Instructions:

We did:

- The closing of the Annual Staff Conference 2022 was led by a care experienced young adult who shared her emotional play 'Roughly 150 Years' it tells her story of her estranged Mother's death, reflecting on her childhood experiences as a young carer and her relationship with practitioners supporting her.
- Feedback from the children's workforce described the performance as a touching and moving piece which included a beautiful ballet performance and was a powerful close to a conference focussed on how we engage and work with children.
- Children and young people contributed extensively to the planning of Black History Month. Our children in care council, Barnet on Point (BOP), organised an event featuring a Black care experienced young adult who shared their experiences of being in care, education, and work.
- Through their valuable contributions, children and young people created an engaging Black History Month experience that fostered understanding and appreciation of different cultures and highlighted the importance of celebrating diversity and promoting inclusivity.
- BOP members arranged a visit to the Foundling Museum during the Easter holidays to explore the history and exhibits on display.
- Positively, an expert by experience has been employed as a personal advisor to support other care-experienced young people. This role brings valuable perspectives to how professionals work with young people and provides support to colleagues in fostering a deeper consideration of the needs and experiences of children in and leaving care.
- BOP members attended Skills to Foster training and provided advice to prospective new carers on building relationships. Introducing Q&A sessions allowed for interaction between prospective carers and young people who shared the following advice for practitioners and carers: keeping promises, being on time, communication, acknowledging birthdays, providing reasons for cancellations, prompt responses, non-judgmental attitudes, setting high aspirations, involving children in decisions, respect and equality, prioritizing well-being, advocacy, supporting interests, occasional outings, holiday plans, creativity, and effectiveness in meeting their needs.



The performance was a touching and moving piece which included a beautiful ballet performance and was a powerful close to a conference focussed on how we engage and work with children.

You said:

We want more opportunities within schools to give feedback about our experiences and highlight the need for more representation in schools.

We did:

- Barnet Family service works alongside our local schools and external agencies to support service development. This is ongoing support and participation work with our BOP members, Youth Assembly and Youth Parliament members leading their specific campaigns in their schools, e.g., promoting the LGBTQIA+ voices, Trans inclusion, Knife Crime etc.
<https://barnetyouth.uk/Children-and-Young-People-Participation-across-Barnet>
- Young people's voices are pro-actively integrated into our multi-agency training programme, with a specific focus on promoting participation and emphasising the importance of amplifying young people's perspectives. For example, young people contribute to our training sessions addressing serious youth violence.
- Young people's views about the need for greater representation in schools have been integrated into the core strategic priorities of the Barnet Safeguarding Children Partnership, specifically in strengthening recruitment and retention efforts across the partnership. Young people views were incorporated in to planning for the Barnet Safeguarding Children Partnership conference in July 2023.

You said:

Child protection procedures and conferences can feel “intimidating”, and we want to understand more about how it works.

We did:

- In May 2022, our first participation event was held for young people with child protection plans (Go-karting and cinema with their conference reviewing officers, accompanied by quality assurance officers) with the aim of building more trusted relationships and opening discussions about the child's experience of the child protection process.
- In October 2022, a second activity day took place (bowling and a meal) and children were presented with the initial concepts for an animation explaining the child protection conference process and were able to vote and consult on its design. The opportunity was used to gather valuable feedback from the children regarding their experiences of CP conferences, suggestions for improvement, preferences for sharing their views, participating in decisions, and examining the effectiveness of working with their families was used to inform our participation work. Additionally, feedback was sought on the design proposals to enhance the information provided to them about the CP conference service.
- The result of this was a co-produced animation that provides comprehensive information about the child protection conference process. The animation highlights the various ways in which children and young people can express their views and participate in their conferences.
<https://barnet.weareclearhead.com/Barnet-ChildProtectionConferencePrimaryFull.mp4>

- A sibling group of four made substantial contributions to the design of the video and were delighted to be acknowledged and credited for their creative input. This collaborative effort ensured that the animation accurately reflected their perspectives and empowered them to participate in our next project to share children's perspectives with the workforce.
- The animation is designed to be a tool to support initial conversations and understanding between the child, their parents, and their social worker about the child protection process.



You said:

We feel respected when rewarded and recognised for our time with vouchers, references, certificates, or work experience.

We did:

- A consistent approach and process has been developed so that children are recognised and remunerated for their time and input across the service; this has had a positive impact on participation.
- All children attending the Children in Care summer celebration event received a certificate to celebrate their achievements. The certificates were written by social workers, virtual school practitioners and carers with individual comments highlighting their unique strengths.

You said:

We want to build meaningful and trusting relationships with the people who support us and promote our views.

We did:

- Children say that they generally have at least one professional in their lives they trust and feel they can speak with.
- The refreshed practice standards include a focus on seeking to build meaningful relationships with children, understand the perspective and lived experience on their relationships, including their Social GRACES.
- Training focusing on mentalization-based techniques, trauma-informed approaches, Social GRACES, confident conversations in race and communication with children with disabilities has been promoted with strong attendance from staff. These efforts aim to enhance practitioners' skills in building trusted relationships with children and young people from all backgrounds, promoting their well-being.

- Feedback from the Bright Spots Survey has been addressed by the Onwards and Upwards: Leaving Care Service with a particular emphasis on improving trusted relationship between personal advisors and young people, while also providing positive activities for young people to enjoy.
- The Early Help Practice Standards have been updated to incorporate a greater focus on practitioners using Restorative Practice approaches, 'modelling' effective ways of building and maintaining trusted and healthy relationships and promoting pro-social attitudes and behaviours.
- Our 'Trusted Relationships' project (2018 – 2022) worked with young people aged 10-17 who were at risk of criminal and/or sexual exploitation. School-based prevention programmes and community based creative safe spaces provided children with opportunities to develop trusted relationships with professionals which were key to reducing risk. The project supported learning across Family Services about the importance of building trusted relationships with children.
- This further supported the co-production of an Early Help CEAM tool which has been implemented in practice. The importance of the child's voice in measuring risk and developing a plan was highlighted, along with the identification of best practice in integrated working between the statutory and voluntary/ community sector around the child. The project also led to the Vulnerable Adolescents at Risk Panel being refreshed, adopting more child-focused, psychologically informed discussion around risk.

To whom it may concern,

I am writing with regards to your Social Worker J.

We had the pleasure of having J for over 18 months. The circumstances in which took our case wasn't the best of circumstances, but she completely made us as a family as a whole very comfortable.

We developed a very trusting relationship with her as did our children.

J is not like your average social worker. (We have come across some really God awful social workers in our time). She is exceptionally passionate about being a Social Worker. When she says she enjoys being a social worker you can see it comes from the heart.

Even on her visits she would do little activities with the children. I have never seen a social worker ever engage with our children in this way. If my daughter was going through a hard time one phone call to J and she would visit and speak with her and she would even bring something as a distraction or give her sound advice on how to handle a situation.

I could phone her up and literally breakdown and cry and know that I am safe with her. I can guarantee you could never ever phone another social worker and cry the way I have needed to without fears of some sort of repercussions. When I spoke with J she would give me a safe space to think things through and work ways out of a difficult situation

This is why our case was always flowing positively and in the right way because our social worker was determined to do what was right by our children and our family as a whole. There was no short cuts. From beginning to end J would see through every task and held anyone accountable for the bits they had to do. She alleviated so much pressure from me as a whole.

By doing this I was able to navigate through some very testing times and come out through it really strong.

Everyday whilst we had J I was so thankful. I never took one day for granted. We were devastated that we had to lose her. She became a very important person in our lives. The children were upset also.

J was always one step ahead. She will always email immediately of services that have become available to families. She really knew her stuff.

She is a huge asset to the team. A massive asset. As I have said I have met other Social Workers and J is a real example of what a real social worker should be. Hardworking. But to also work with her heart. She is someone who 100% enjoys her job as we have never met anyone as enthusiastic and hardworking like her.

We would have loved for her to stay on as our social worker, but we understand that this would not be possible with the huge amount of caseloads the department has.

We miss her tremendously.

Kind regards

You said:

We want the voices of lesser heard children and young people to be heard and we need more opportunities for one-to-one participation for younger children and young people who feel less able to join group or forum activities.

We did:

- Children's Reviewing Officers and Independent Reviewing Officers have developed bi-annual activity events for children and young people. These provide an opportunity for children and young people to share their views on services and what we could focus on to improve these services. Following the Lundy Model of participation staff are more routinely collecting information about the service they provide by listening to families experiencing statutory child protection processes
- More children are attending child protection conferences and it is anticipated that the animation explaining the child protection process will encourage more children to participate in their Child Protection conferences.
- There are more opportunities for one-to-one activities to support the participation of families and young people especially within Barnet Integrated Clinical Services, Early Help, Holiday Activity Fund (BACE positive activities), Duke of Edinburgh Awards and Youth Justice Services.
- Our work in this area continues to evolve, so we can reach lesser heard voices, particularly those from marginalised communities, and with additional vulnerabilities by creating a variety of ways to engage with them and providing the participation opportunities and activities they identify.
- The Early Help service worked with 94 children accessing BACE activities to co-produce the Early Help strategy. This enabled the perspectives of children to contribute to the Early Help provision to families in Barnet.
- The BACE programme has been designed using feedback from children and young people about what activities they would like included. This has encouraged children and young people who may not feel able to participate in more formal feedback to engage with activities that interest them and share their views in a more informal setting.



What we will focus on next:

- Participation Leads and officers are co-developing a child-led work plan and a Young Experts group with children and practitioners which will aim to provide a child-led quality assurance forum in which children can review what we are doing and hold us to account for the things we said we would do and tell us what we still need to do better.
- We will be focusing on providing more invitational, creative, and one-to-one opportunities for feedback and platforms for sharing children's feedback with workforce and families, i.e., sound bites, podcasts, digital magazines.
- Encouraging all children to participate in meetings about them, particularly Child in Need Meetings, is a focus for the participation/service development work with projects that have started to become embedded, i.e., inviting children to chair their meetings using an invitational letter developed by children from BOP who have chaired their own meetings.
- Members of BOP have also provided support and tips to children and young people thinking about chairing their meetings, in recorded voice notes to be shared with children and young people by their social workers. Development work is currently underway to provide a skills-based workshop offer to children and young people to build confidence and learn the skills helpful for chairing/participation in their meetings, supported by children who have experience of this.
- Practice Leads and participation/service development officer are developing an activity led approach to engage children and young people supported by a CiN plan to mirror the work done with children on child protection plans and provide opportunities for them to engage in positive activities with their social workers, whilst also being provided with opportunities to share their feedback.
- Practice Leads and participation/service development officer are working in collaboration with Early Help to identify more opportunities to embed access for children in need to our established BACE activities and positive activities.
- Children are supporting the development of co-produced Case Summaries in which they co-author the summary information on their records; this will be shared with all professionals working with the child, so it is told in their own words and they do not have to repeat their story.



Feedback from Children and Young People and Parents

CRO/ QA

What did we do well?

“Helped us, problems, home environment more calmer then before.” (Child)

REACH

“Really pleased with the new social worker H, she is the best. Very professional knows how to talk to the kids and she always texts back and she is really the best. I am Happy with everything at the moment.” (Young person)

BICS

“Very grateful for the amazing support received from BICS through the family therapy service. The practitioners were very knowledgeable and feels like I am “being held” by all the services supporting me. I can’t express how grateful I am to have some weight off of my shoulders and I shared this with lots of other professionals and parents who were at the event.” (Parent/ Mum)

Children in Care

“One thing I really like about L is how supportive she’s been and how well she’s handled everything with my auntie, she’s overall just been very supportive.” (Young person)

MASH

“S understood why she was contacted by MASH, and she was not surprised that she was contacted as there were ongoing disputes with her neighbours. S disclosed that the same had been going on with her previous neighbours, so she tried to mind her business. S stated that her discussion with the SW was very good, as they both understood one another and had an equal opportunity to speak. S said both were able to express themselves and had good rapport. S understood that she was contacted because there were safeguarding concerns, and expressed she was happy to speak with SW because it was important the investigation was done properly.” (Parent/ professional)

I&P

“I think C has been a brilliant social worker because not only has she been punctual on getting the things that were crucial to me like the national insurance number but every time we meet in person, she pays close attention in my personal interests like my love for marvel movies. C is very kind, and I can speak to her comfortably like I am talking to one of my friends from college and I very much believe she understands me very well.” (Young person)

Fostering Event

“This was the best day ever and she was so happy, but what is making her very sad is that she is also getting a new social worker and she doesn’t want a new social worker.” (Young person’s views after being matched long term with their foster carer)

BICS

“Made me re-evaluate how I parent and I’m really grateful for that, thank you” (Parent)

Early Help HUB/ Partnership together an open day

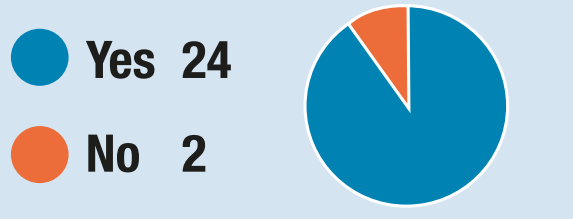
“It was great, I just wished we had seen more Finchley families.” (Parent)

Child & Family Early Help Barnet Active, Creative, Engaged (BACE) Feedback

Winter Positive Activities and BACE (Barnet Active Creative, Engaging) Holidays 2022 Staff Feedback

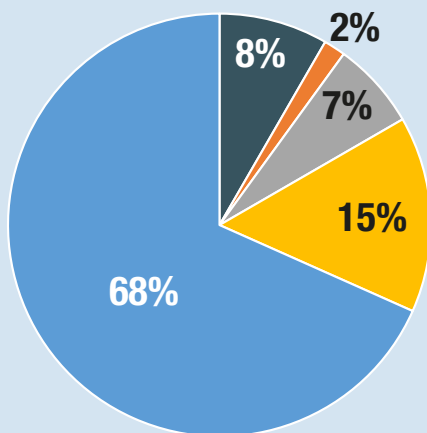
26 Responses

Did you receive information about your role within the PA and BACE activities you worked in, schedule of activities, information about the lunches or Activity Bags and Food Parcels any other information prior to starting?



Feedback from Families

- Star 1
- Star 2
- Star 3
- Star 4
- Star 5



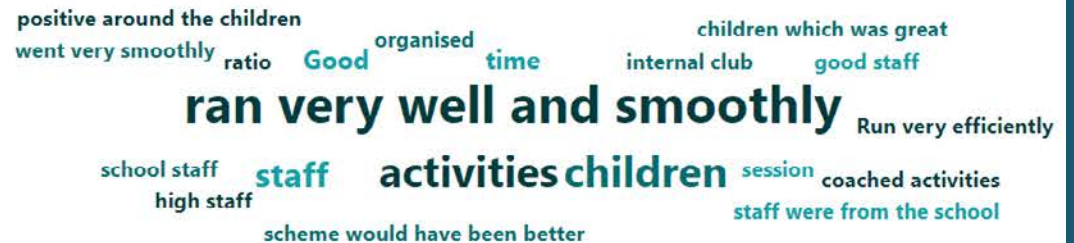
"L's progress was really heartwarming to see, actually. She definitely became more considerate as the weeks went on, and I noticed her really helping out some of the newer girls this week. She has taken our encouragements on board well, and I hope she continues on this trajectory after camp is done"

"H has been asking to come back to camp and has not stopped talking about it"

" I really like archery and would like to do it again. I have never done it before."

"My favourite thing about camp was the arts and crafts" "I play with D, and N, we've been playing hide and seek and tag. We play lots of games in drama. I've had a fun week... Yes, I would come back. I love camp."

6 respondents (23%) answered **ran very well and smoothly** for this question.

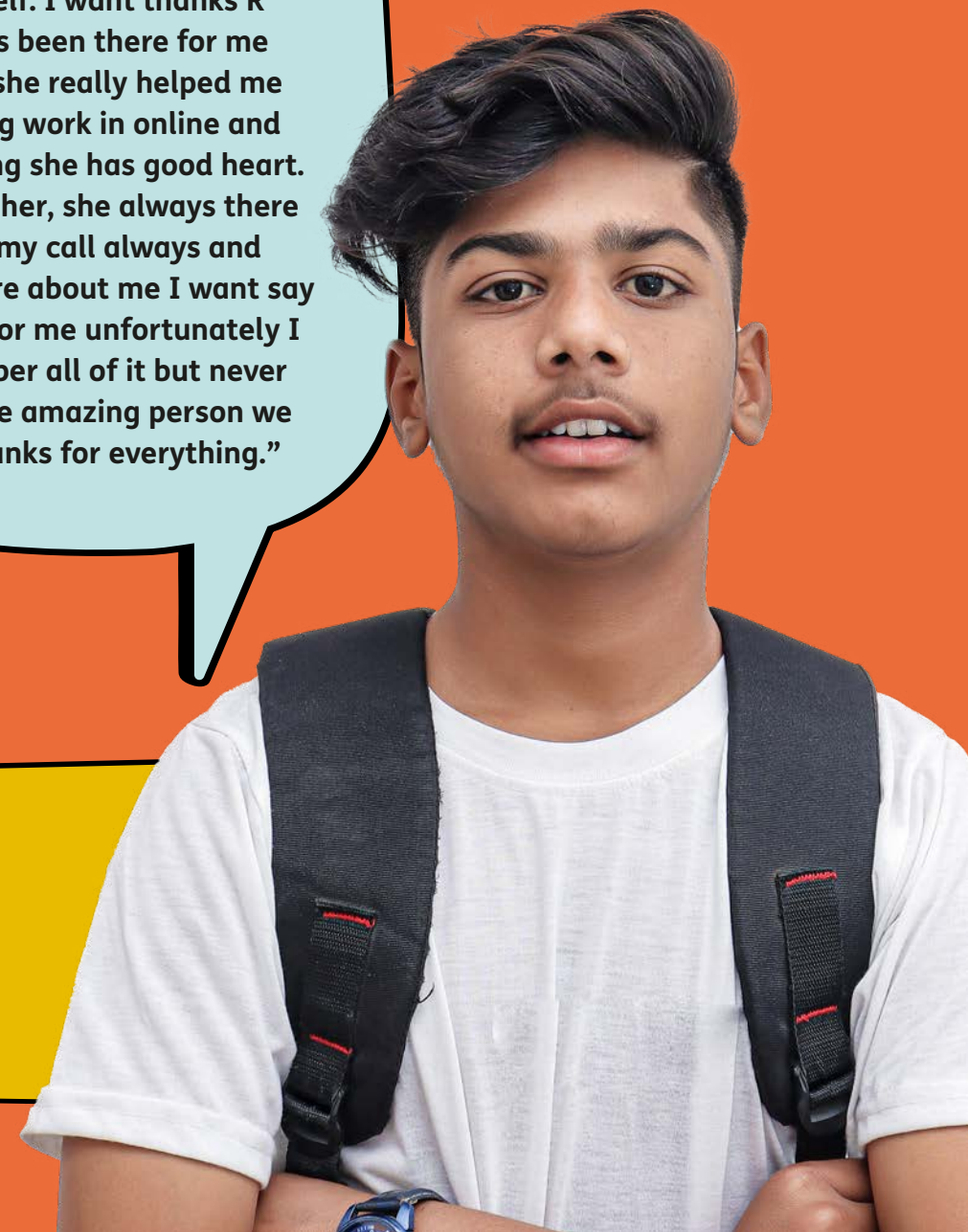


Areas of strength:

Over the last six months, the volume of encouraging feedback from children, parents, carers, families, and young people has continued to grow. A recurring theme is the significance of their relationships with professionals and children's need to be heard and listened to. Feedback from children and young people in this quarter has, again, highlighted their experience of committed and dedicated front-line practitioners.

Likewise, feedback from care experienced young adults accessing services from Onwards and Upwards highlights positive relationships with and interventions from their Personal Advisors (PAs). The support provided is reported as generally strong and young people feel respected and taken care of. Onwards and Upwards now arrange positive activities for care experienced young adults accessing their services, following the recommendations from their 'Bright spots' survey, i.e., Getting to Know You events.

The increased focus on gathering feedback across all services strengthens our understanding of what families need and how services can provide agile and targeted responses to need



"I don't have no family in this country and everything not easy to do by myself. I want thanks R because she's been there for me all the time, she really helped me about housing work in online and she is amazing she has good heart. When I need her, she always there she answers my call always and she really care about me I want say you did lots for me unfortunately I can't remember all of it but never forget you are amazing person we need you, thanks for everything."

Anonymous: Family Feedback Form

"More male workers"

"The service which is provided for children is fantastic and this is emphasised".

Areas for development:

Children want us to improve partnership communication and collaboration; they have told us that not all schools they attend fully understand the importance of maintaining their confidentiality, for example children attending meetings in rooms that are visible to other students. Additionally, the repetition of questions by multiple professionals has given young people the impression that not all professionals speak to one another, leading to frustration that they need to retell their stories. As a result, we are developing ways in which information can be shared to facilitate a seamless experience for children.

Children want us to increase the diversity of our workforce as do we and we agree the workforce should reflect the diverse backgrounds of the children we work with. Our current social work workforce are 42.9% Black and Global Majority (29.3% Black, 9.5% Asian and 4.1% Mixed) and 57.1% White (Children's Social Work Workforce Census 2022).

Our leadership team has the least diversity, and this cannot be readily resolved in the immediate term without individuals moving on; but succession planning is focused on ensuring equity of opportunity through Leadership in Colour programmes delivered by the Staff College.

Furthermore, quarterly Career Conversations are hosted to foster more equitable opportunities for career progression. These initiatives collectively aim to promote fairness, inclusivity, and equal chances for individuals throughout the recruitment and career advancement processes.

We have included diversity, equity and equality in our recruitment and retention strategy and have implemented anonymous recruitment, diverse interview panels and adjustments to support neurodiverse applicant.

Our practice framework reflects our commitment to anti-racist practice and focus on the social Graces in practice and supervision of practice, a workforce development programme has supported courageous conversations and Black and Global Majority inequalities.

Transparency remains a recurring theme, with some young people reporting that they do not understand the roles of some professionals; a piece of work on developing an index/ecomap of professionals is being developed to ensure children have a clear understanding of who is involved in their assessment and care plan, why and where they report to. The CP animation video is aimed at helping children understand who is attending meetings about them and how decisions are made, the move towards supporting children to chair or co-chair their meetings will be an empowering way for them to ask questions and clarify the roles of the professionals in attendance.

Some children have expressed that they have not felt heard or have experienced multiple professionals repeating the same questions which makes them feel like they are being 'manipulated'. A project with children to co-produce their case summaries and update these annually, if they continue to be in receipt of services, is planned for 2023 to improve this experience for children.

5. Feedback from parents and carers

There has been a positive increase in the volume of family feedback received and this has also provided stronger feedback on parents and carers having 'at least one professional they could communicate with', demonstrating a continued commitment to working in partnership with parents and carers.

Parent Champions are parent volunteers who speak to other parents about childcare and local services in their communities. Our network of Parent Champions is supported by Child & Family Early Help Services; they presented at the Annual Staff conference and shared the development of the how the Parent Champions peer-to-peer programme works followed by a Q&A Panel.

The Parenting Hub Intervention Lead facilitated a conversation with the Parent Champions about how the model and their work has benefited other parents. The session ended with the Parent Champions asking staff to share their ideas about how they think Parent Champions can benefit their services and how Parent Champions can be embedded across all parts of the service.

Social Work Managers are increasingly considering how parents can be included in the decision-making process and a new model has been started in the duty and assessment teams where parents are invited to join supervision discussions between the manager and social worker. This has enabled decisions to be agreed which are informed by the perspective of parents as experts in their own lives.

Areas of strength:

The feedback from parents highlights an increased commitment to the level of collaboration and participation with families and carers across the service. Feedback suggests a good level of satisfaction among families. Many families who have engaged with our services report feeling "listened to" and "heard."

Feedback indicates that overall, services have maintained a more focussed approach to listening to parents and carers, which is enabled by the range of options available for parents and carers to offer feedback. Examples of feedback include contact made by Team Managers and auditors, activities, digital family feedback forms, case file audits, CRO feedback forms, BACE feedback forms, foster carers survey, EH feedback loops, Parent Champions, Youth Justice survey, and commissioned services focus groups.

Parents of young people using the Youth Justice Service (YJS) attend the Youth Justice Matters Board along with young people to share their experiences and recommendations in relation to how to shape the service moving forward. This enabled the perspectives and experiences of young people and their families to forefront service development.

The REACH Team continues to receive positive feedback from families highlighting the positive relationships young people have with practitioners. The feedback also highlights how the needs, perspectives and experiences of young people are listened to and inform planning and risk management.

REACH Team

REACH team are doing the best. (Parent)

Listening to our needs and keeping my son safe. (Parent)

Children with Disabilities Service - Parents have noted the development of strong relationships and the provision of comprehensive support to families.

I'm so sorry I couldn't thank you enough when you brought T home for me. I just want to say a very big thank you to you and Mrs H for helping to bring T home for me. I really appreciate you all for your help today and understanding. Today was a really difficult day for me but in your own way you helped make it better. I can't thank you enough. God bless you (Parent)

"Because she speaks my language, I understand everything she told me, she listened to me and my problems and what worries I had with my children, she understood my cultural background, explained what to do next or better."

BICS – The commitment to collaborative work with carers, parents, and families remains steadfast, resulting in positive feedback and robust levels of engagement.

"Hi BICS, on the behalf of CYP I would like to say thank you for your support and advice, help and patience working with her in school. We appreciate your efforts time and patience with her. I would like her to become a member and contribute towards this project. Thank you. (Parent)"

Children in Care – The efforts of social workers in facilitating the engagement of young people in hobbies, interests, and activities aligned with their goals has earned commendations from parents and families.

'K has said he really liked C's dog! He also said she is very nice, and he is happy she supported him coming home!' 'D would like to say that he has really enjoyed having C as his social worker because she helped him get into basketball camp.'

Conference & Reviewing Officers (CRO) – The commitment to understanding the perspectives of children and families and providing young people with the necessary support to build confidence during the child protection conference process, remains a priority

'I felt happy – having social care in our lives has helped us to have such fun times, we didn't have fun times before'

Intervention & Planning (I&P) – Feedback indicates that the I&P social workers are taking the time to get to know families, seek their perspectives and work alongside families in a collaborative way.

‘I think C has been a brilliant social worker because not only has she been punctual on getting the things that were crucial to me like the national insurance number, but every time we meet in person, she pays close attention in my personal interests like my love for marvel movies. C is very kind, and I can speak to her comfortably like I am talking to one of my friends from college and I very much believe she understands me very well.’

MASH – The feedback received is consistently positive and indicates a responsive, strengths-based service.

Fostering Services

Cost of living – Numerous emails received from carers thanking the LA for considering the cost-of-living impact upon FC’s caring for the children and YP of Barnet – (Carers)

‘Parent stated that she was encouraged to stay strong by the social worker’.

‘Parent felt that the social worker was very helpful and kind’



Areas of development:

- Feedback has identified the need to better manage parents' expectations of our services and for roles to be clearly defined. For example, a parent stated their disappointment in the social worker not meeting their house needs when she said, "Gave me false hope to get housing". A renewed focus aligned to the refreshed practice principle of partnership working, participation and co-production will provide opportunities for professionals and families to review plans together, so it will be clear what professional is responsible for specific agreed actions. This will be supported by the Roles and Responsibilities Project noted earlier in the report.
- Feedback received from a Fostering event celebrating matched long-term placements indicates a mixed response from foster carers: "It's important to celebrate long-term matching; however, some felt an element of sadness and reported they do not think this is something that we should be celebrating, as this means to the child that they are not going to return home and the certificate of the match is a constant reminder of that". This highlights the need for individual perspectives to be considered and the importance of consultation when planning these celebrations.

6. Commissioning, Performance and Improvement Service

Mental Health Charter Consultation Report.

The 2021 census showed an increase in the population of 0-19-year-olds in the Borough of Barnet to 100,000, almost a quarter of the borough's population. The pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on the mental health of young people, leading to an increase in demand for mental health services. To address this, Family Services, Barnet Council, and health partners and the voluntary sector are working together to design a Mental Health Charter based on the THRIVE principles, which will be user-friendly for young people. To ensure the charter is representative of young people's needs, Family Services partnered with Young Barnet Foundation to conduct focus groups and gather the views of Barnet's young people.

Summary of Mental Health Charter Conclusions

The focus groups conducted by Family Services and Young Barnet Foundation on the proposed Mental Health Charter for young people in the Borough of Barnet received positive feedback. The young people felt that the charter should be owned by young people, and they want to be actively involved in co-designing it. They also expressed a need for the charter to stretch into schools and for wider training on mental health and well-being for those who care for young people. Some young people voiced concerns about negative experiences in schools and a lack of trust in adults. They believe that the charter would support their mental health needs, but they also emphasised the importance of youth voice in its success and the need to take their negative experiences seriously.

Local Authority to improve support for carers and young carers in Barnet.

Summary of Conclusions

The focus groups with carers and young carers were conducted to gather information about their experiences with accessing resources and support services in the community. The findings showed that support from voluntary and community organisations, as well as school workshops, was highly valued by young carers and young adult carers. However, they felt there was a lack of mental health support and understanding from the community, including schools. They also highlighted long waiting lists and lack of individual support for academic achievements as barriers. Young carers and young adult carers called for prioritising their mental health, expanding support services, and raising awareness. They also requested more opportunities for learning, training, and socialising. On the other hand, adult carers found support from charity organisations to be a strength but had mixed opinions about support from health services and schools. They emphasised the need for better attention and support from health services.

Summary of Recommendations

Barnet Carers has made recommendations based on feedback received from focus groups with carers and young carers. The recommendations aim to improve support for carers and young carers in Barnet. The initiatives include:

Summary of Young Carers Support:

- Increasing identification and awareness of young carers' needs in schools and children's services with a training program for professionals.
- Expanding children's mental health services and informal mentoring to support emotional and self-confidence needs of young carers.

Summary of Recommendations

The plan to create a Mental Health Charter for young people in the Borough of Barnet includes discussions with senior Family Services Managers, Adults and Health, to align the charter's contents, timelines and buy-in from partners such as schools and local communities. A task and finish group will be formed with young people as members to co-design the charter, consult on the final version and reach consensus on the main body or partner responsible for the charter. This will be a part of the Mental Health Strategy for Children and Young People and may include the Young Mental Health Ambassadors Program or trained young Mental Health First Aiders. Improved communication will be made to residents of Barnet on the support available to young people.

Barnet Carers Focus Group Report Summary

Barnet Carers Focus Group Report presents the results of focus group discussions with carers and young carers in Barnet. The purpose was to gather their perspectives on caring for a vulnerable relative, accessing support, and their needs. The discussions were part of a project to refresh the Carers and Young Carers Strategy for the next five years and complemented the findings from surveys of carers and young carers. The discussions took place in person and remotely in September and October 2022 and involved representatives of different types of carers. The findings are presented in four areas: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and risks/concerns. The carers and young carers valued services provided by small charities, but there was a lack of respite services and a need for more mental health and peer support, skills training, and opportunities for entertainment and cultural activities. Young carers specifically called for early mental health support, education, and awareness in schools and among professionals, academic support, and employment and career advice. The findings are important for organisations and the

- Increasing capacity of children's tuition support services and expanding funding for young carers activities.

Summary of Adult Carers Support:

- Considering grant opportunities to provide respite services and increasing resources for existing health and wellbeing services.
- Improving identification and support for parent carers, raising awareness among health professionals, and establishing day care centres.
- Offering more peer support for carers of people with similar health conditions.

What we will focus on next

- Continue the roll-out of the Young Commissioners Programme, which has started with a cohort who have participated in the procurement of the Return Home Interviews service, including writing questions for the tendering process and being a member of the panel interviewing applicants. The next cohort are starting in September 2023 and will be supporting the Commissioning Team on their review of our Independent Visitors and Advocacy services.
- Contribute to the council's Consultation and Engagement Network in developing best practice in working with children and young people.
- Consultation and Engagement work on the new Placements Sufficiency Strategy and in delivery of the Serious Youth Violence Duty.

7. Summary and Impact

- The implementation of My Say Matters has resulted in an increased volume of feedback from children, young people, and families across all service areas. This feedback has been incorporated in planning practitioner training and developing services that align with the expressed needs of families.
- Families have shown growing confidence in engaging with the service and building trusting relationships with professionals.
- Participation and co-production which were initially led by the participation team are now being more consistently embedded across the service and practitioners are becoming increasingly involved in leading areas of this work.
- The activity in this area of work has increased positive feedback from parents, carers, and children who feel that their voices are being heard and listened to.
- The feedback received from children and families has directly influenced the refreshed Practice Framework, emphasising the importance of relationship-based practice and the importance of partnership working, participation and co-production.
- Service areas are acting upon the feedback they receive, and this is having a positive impact on the experience children, young people and families have of our services. For example, BICS has implemented more informal access to clinical services, BACE have adjusted their offer in line with feedback from families.

- YJS are providing mentorship and additional support to Black boys to help tackle the negative impact of systemic racism and disproportionality in the criminal justice system. YJS have continued to facilitate a residential programme for young people using their services to work with the ‘child first, offender second’. Some young people who attended previous residential programmes have now become mentors for other young people in Barnet.
- YJS have also co-produced Court leaflets and Court information packs with young people, also, young people created a ‘whiteboard project’ (short animation), using their own voices and perspectives to explain their experiences of engaging with YJS. This is a resource for use with young people entering the service for the first time. Another animation was, also, co-produced with young people to explain their experiences and participation of reparation activities to be used to more clearly explain to other young people entering the service.
- With the increasing focus on collecting feedback across services, sharing feedback, learning and the impact of the feedback on services needs to be routinely shared and analysed. We have started to share best practice by creating a quarterly community of practice/participation meetings which can be further developed to be shared more widely to the workforce. There will be a focus on capturing the information that is shared from each service area so it can be included in future reports and service development.
- While progress has been made, there are still areas for further development, particularly in collecting feedback from children and young people with lesser heard or under-represented voices. The work with to provide our children in need more opportunities to attend and hold professionals accountable in their meetings and access to resources such as BACE is an example of how this is being addressed.

8. Next Steps

1. Sharing learning- Practice and Learning Managers to lead

- Involving children and young people in sharing the learning from this report with the service. A podcast has been co-produced with young people where they explain the content of this report to staff. Feedback is being sought from young people and the workforce in relation to the podcast and consideration is being given to adding a visual element to the podcast.
- To support access to services for young people, there are plans to collaborate with the BACE media activities to produce the next podcast (including co-producing the script, recording, editing, designing visuals). This will provide young people with the opportunities to develop their skills as well as being actively involved in presenting feedback from children and families to the workforce.
- To share family feedback more widely with the workforce, the project team are supporting to consider how physical or digital posters can be utilised to share family feedback in a strengths-based way and to incorporate this into the working environment.

2. Strengthen Multi-agency partnerships:

- Feedback about children’s need for confidentiality and privacy when in meetings to be shared with schools and closer working relationships with multi-agency partners to reduce the repetition of questions families experience and promote a more joined up approach when working with families. Exploration of how this can be incorporated into multi-agency training programme.

- Co production of plans with families and professionals will help to clarify the role of each person supporting the family. PALMs are facilitating a series of practice workshops, one specifically focused on child centred planning, where co production with professionals will be a key theme.

3. Developing Family Feedback:

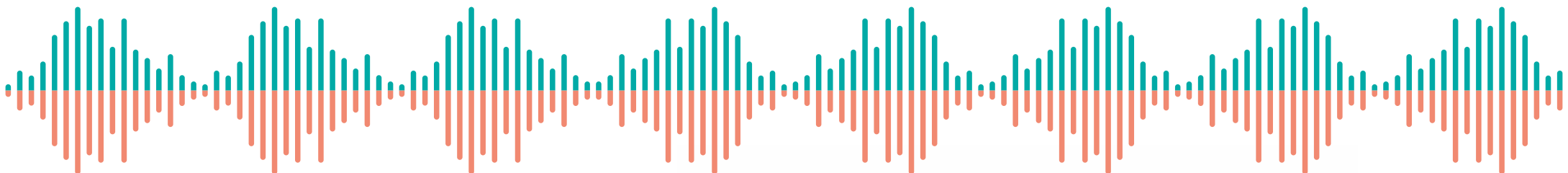
- Promote the use of the digital family feedback form through the workforce to collect more information, lived experience and suggestions from children and young people and their families.
- Using existing forums to ensure that all services are sharing the feedback they have collected and the impact of this on service development and delivery. This will support all the activity to be included and analysed in future reports.
- Develop ways for people with disabilities to access verbal and sensory feedback forms.
- Increase opportunities for children and young people to share their views and co-produce plans by chairing their meetings or contributing to their meetings in a way they are comfortable with. Tools have been developed as outlined above with young people for young people and work is currently underway to develop workshops with young people where they can develop confidence and skills needed to have ownership of their meetings.
- Activity days have been a successful way of engaging children on Child Protection plans and gathering their feedback on service delivery and improvement. Activity days for children on Child in Need plans are now being developed to provide these young people with opportunities to have fun experiences with their social worker, alongside having the opportunity to feedback about their experience of services and input into service development.

4. Increasing Transparency and managing expectations:

- Ensure staff are equipped to offer transparent advice to parents, carers, and care leavers in relation to Housing, thereby reducing the chances of relationship breakdowns with families. This includes signposting and supporting individuals to access housing support if required.
- Be transparent about the knowledge we have and be able to direct families and parents to the right support via our Roles and Responsibilities Project: this includes being clear about the roles of different professionals and co-producing plans with families and professionals to include issues that children and their families have asked for support with.

To find more and or how to get involved visit
<https://www.barnet.gov.uk/mysaymatters>





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MY SAY
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**Barnet Family
Feedback
Report**
June 2023