



CHILD PARTICIPATION AND FAMILY INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY

“
MY SAY
MATTERS
”

GETTING
OUR
MESSAGE
OUT

**Barnet Family
Feedback
Report**

February 2024

Caring for people, our places and the planet



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Introduction

This report reviews and updates you on the four areas of service development identified in the Family Feedback Report June 2023:

- 1. Increasing Transparency and Managing Expectations**
- 2. Sharing Learning**
- 3. Strengthen Multi-Agency Partnerships**
- 4. Developing Family Feedback**

This report, also, sets out family feedback received in the last six months (July 2023 to January 2024), and themes identified. Included are updates from different service areas focused on how family feedback has shaped and developed the services we offer children, young people, and their families.

A key development since our previous report in June 2023 is that children and young people, our self-identified as 'Young Experts', have reviewed the actions we have taken. You can read about how they think we have done following on from our 'You said, We Did' section.

We want to say a heartfelt thank you to our children, young people and their families who have shared their time, views, ideas, feedback, and energy to work with us and participate in meaningful ways. Also, our gratitude and thanks to the Young Experts who have taken their role extremely seriously and co-produced our practice tools, offering helpful suggestions and evaluation. Our ongoing service developments would not be as effective without their views, feedback, suggestions, and evaluation.



1. You Said, We Did: Increasing transparency and managing expectations.

Increasing transparency and managing expectations was a key theme from the June 2023 Family Feedback report, with some children reporting that they did not understand the roles of different professionals. Additional feedback has been that children are less likely to want to participate in their meetings if they don't know the professionals attending, or if they are not clear about their roles.

This feedback has been used to develop our child led practice tools highlighted in the next section of this report. The practice tools were shared with the workforce in December 2023 and over the next 12 months we will be working to embed these tools in practice. It is our hope that using the tools in direct work with children and young people will improve their experience of professional support.

Roles and Responsibilities Index:

You said:

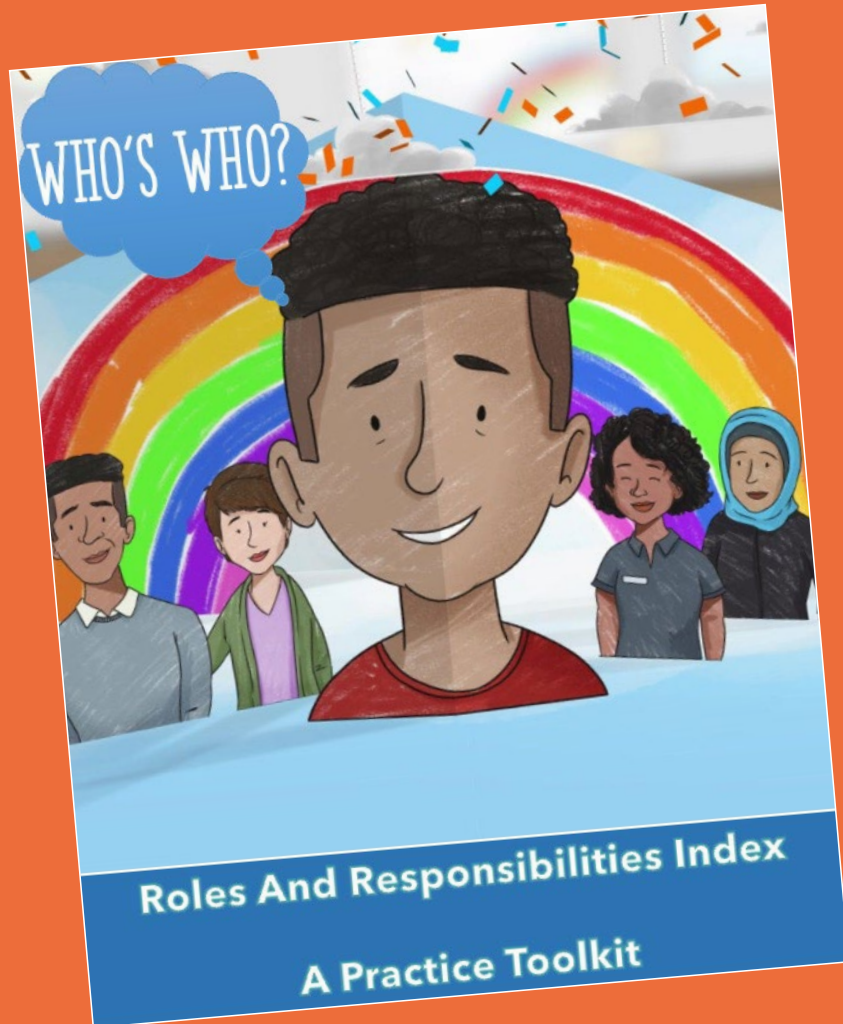
Children told us that there can be a lot of professionals involved with supporting their family and that they were confused about different professional roles and responsibilities. Parents, also, said that they are not always clear on who the professionals involved are and what they do.

We did:

Our 'Who's who, Roles and Responsibilities Index' has been co-produced with children and young people and shared with practitioners. The Index includes direct work tools to map the professional network supporting a family with children.



Our Young Experts told us they thought it would be good for children to have the invitation to choose their own background images. Some Young Experts suggested that children may want to use their own artwork or photography for the background images.



Our Young Experts said:

“I think it’s important that professionals use their real face because it means that we actually get to know the person who knows us.”

The Index includes a glossary of professional roles and responsibilities. Feedback from young experts and parents is that the glossary clearly explains what each professional is responsible for.

Previous feedback from parents identified the need for professionals to better manage expectations of our services and for professional roles to be clearly defined. The index therefore provides the opportunity for professional roles and responsibilities to be clarified with parents.

One-to-one practice development sessions focusing on child centred planning and utilising direct work tools are embedded in our workforce development offer. (Please contact childrens.workforce@barnet.gov.uk to book a session)

Co-producing summaries with children:

You said:

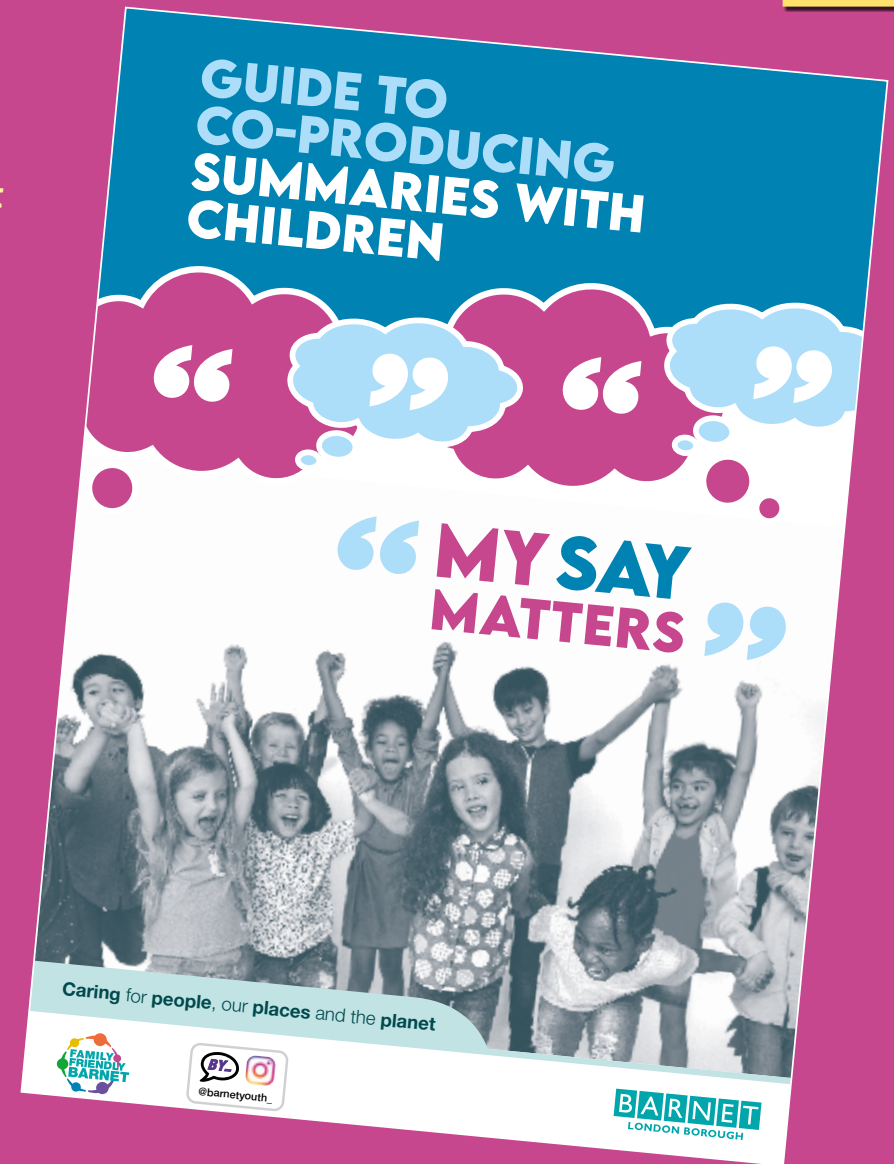
Children told us that they don't always know what information different professionals know about them, and this can make it difficult for them to know what they should say in their meetings. Some children have expressed that they have not felt heard or have experienced multiple professionals repeating the same questions which makes them feel like they are being 'manipulated'.

We did:

In the last six months Young Experts have co-produced a guide for practitioners to co-produce Summaries with children. This tool includes thoughts and ideas from our Young Experts to encourage children to co-author their summary information on their records. Children also suggested that this summary be shared with the professionals working with them. Children hope that they will not have to repeat their stories with multiple professionals.

Our Young Experts said:

**“Loved summaries,
not case summaries, makes
me feel you're trying to listen.”**



Invitation to meetings:

You said:

Our Young experts evaluated the letter developed with children from Barnet On Point (our Children in Care Council) to encourage more children to chair their Looked After or Child in Need meetings. Our Young Experts suggested the invitation letters are redesigned to be more colourful and the letters should be given to children by a trusted adult working with them, such as their social worker.

Our Young Experts shared that it is important to have a letter, but not all children will want to read it so it is helpful when a trusted adult has conversations to explain what it says. Our Young Experts thought that for most children the trusted adult would be their social worker or carers, but it's key that you discuss this with them.

We did:

The invitation letter was re designed with children to be more creative and less formal. The invitation letter is being promoted to the workforce to encourage practitioners to share these with young people. Feedback from practitioners and children will be gathered to see whether there is an increase in children and young people attending their meetings.

You said:

Our Young Experts said some children and young people might find a confidence-building workshop helpful to feel more prepared to attend their meetings. One young expert was identified through the confidence-building workshop that took place in July 2023.

We did:

Confidence for meetings and workshops are being offered both virtually and in person. Opportunities for one-to-one or group sessions will be provided when children request them so they don't need to wait for a scheduled session. One-to-one sessions will also be offered if there is not sufficient interest for group sessions, or if a young person would prefer a one-to-one session.

You Are Invited To Chair A Meeting All About You!

Your social worker arranges regular meetings all about you with the people who look after and support you, about how everyone is working together to make sure you are happy and safe. We would like you to join in! You can join your meeting just to listen, you can say how you feel, or you can direct some or all the meeting. This is called being the chairperson of the meeting.

Chairing a meeting is a bit like being the captain of a team, where you are in charge and help everyone to work together to speak about the things that are important to you and make the best decisions with you. Your social worker or carer will help you to come up with a list of important things to be spoken about called an 'agenda' and this helps make sure that the meeting is focused on these important things. If you like you can chair with someone else at the meeting, like your social worker or another professional.

You may not be sure about whether you want to chair your meeting but want to find out more. If you don't want to chair your meeting, but you want to go to it, or share your views in other ways, like writing them down or recording them - that's ok!

Like lots of people, you may feel nervous about taking part in your meeting, so there are groups you can come to where you can practice with other young people and hear advice from other young people who have chaired meetings. Email familyfeedback@barnet.gov.uk for more info or to book a place. It is a great skill to have in any group you may be part of at school or other activities.

We asked other children and young people who have chaired meetings for their top tips or advice about what they have learnt from chairing meetings. You might find some of it helpful:

- 1) Do some deep breathing, breath slowly, speak slowly, Take your time!
- 2) Try not to overthink or be embarrassed, you will not be judged. Be confident, be brave, it takes courage!
- 3) You can have something to hold such as a fidget toy if you want.
- 4) Use flash cards with your words or little points so you remember what to say in case you forget!
- 5) Have someone who you trust next to you when you speak and to prompt you if you are stuck. Tell the people how you feel and ask for help if you don't understand.
- 6) Be encouraged to speak up! Believe in yourself and don't give up!
- 7) Find a way to say what you want to say in different forms: it can be a written letter or a recording if you don't feel confident enough to speak in front of other people.

Your social worker will speak more to you about this letter, and you can speak to the important people in your life about it if you want.

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Update on the use of the child protection animation:

You said:

Child Protection procedures and conferences can feel 'intimidating', and we want to understand more about how it works.

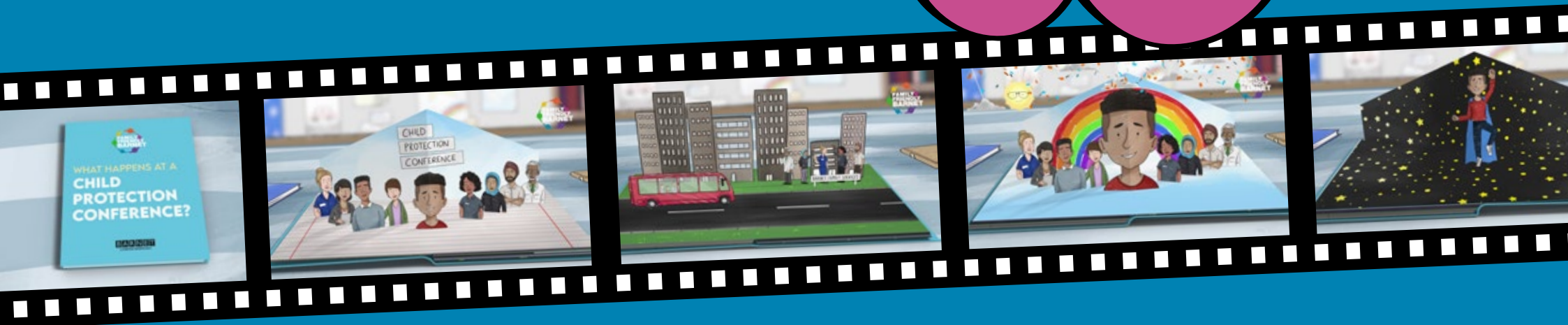
We did:

The Child Protection animation, shared in May 2023 has continued to be used for children and young people with a child protection plan.

From January 2024 to March 2024 more than a quarter of children attended their Child Protection conference. This will continue to be monitored, encouraged, and reported on.

Our Young Experts said:

“Our Young Experts with a child protection plan had all been shown the Child Protection animation by their Conference Reviewing Officer. They said the animation clearly explains who the professionals attending Child Protection Conferences are and is easy to understand.”



2. Sharing learning:

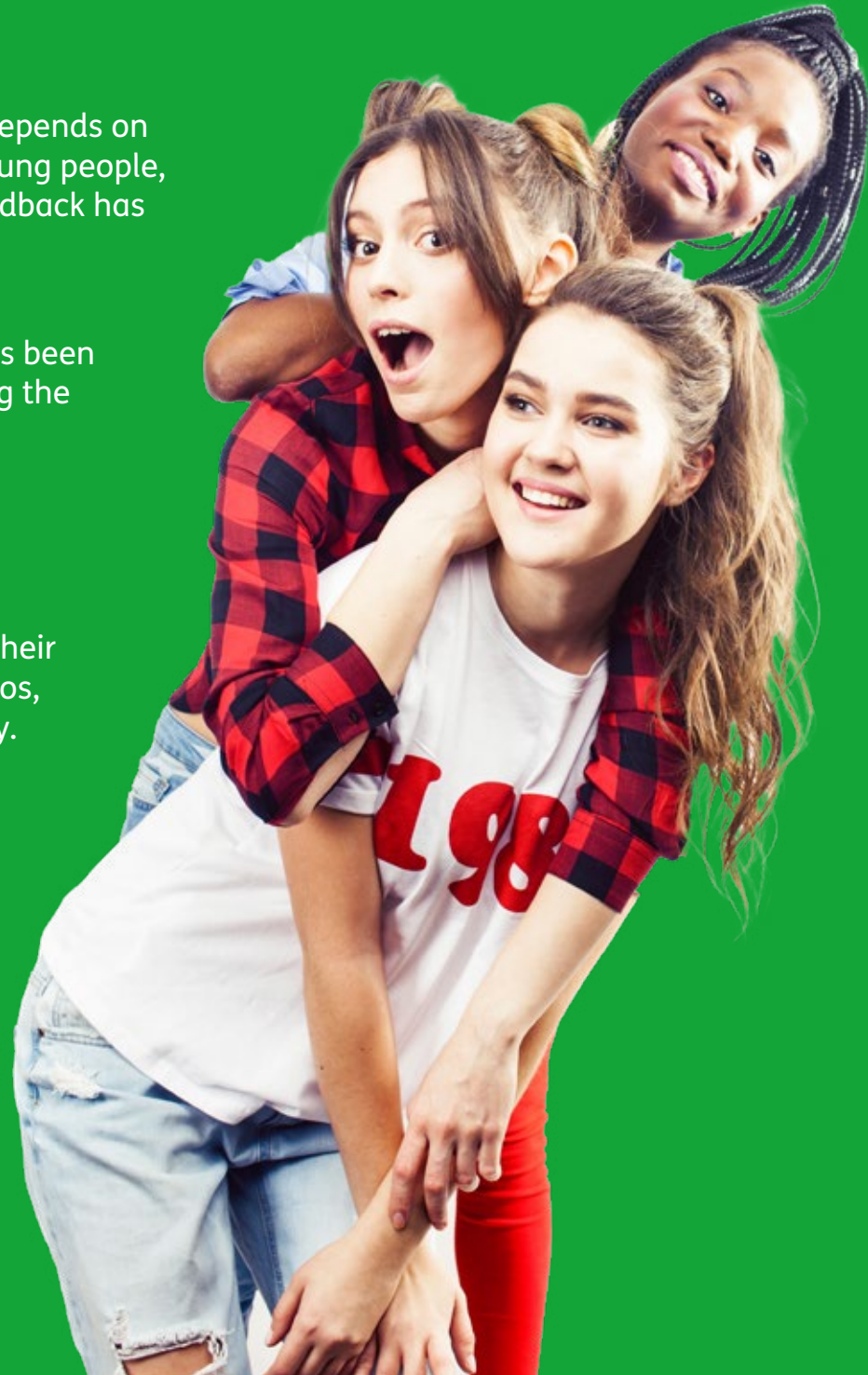
We learnt the best way to share family feedback updates depends on the context. Some feedback can be shared directly from young people, some is best shared by practitioners to explain how the feedback has impacted on service development.

Our Young Experts are co-producing how we share family feedback updates, for example, the design of this report has been co-produced with our Young Experts with the aim of making the report more accessible, engaging and creative.

Our Young Experts are also evaluating how well we have responded to family feedback.

Creative learning projects are currently underway with our Young Experts supporting and encouraging them to share their feedback in formats they choose, for example, making videos, designing artwork and consultation on content and delivery.

A series of short films detailing the development of 'My Say Matters' has been developed and is being shared via social media. This series includes a film focused on family feedback where practitioners detail how practice has been developed in response to family feedback.



3. Strengthen multi-agency partnerships:

You said:

In the June 2023 Family Feedback report, children said that they wanted 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.

We did:

The workforce development team has shared the feedback from children as part of their multi agency training offer. The practice tools co-produced by children and young people have also been shared with multi agency partners along with an explanation of how they were developed.

Feedback from children about their experiences of confidentiality in schools and the questions they are asked by professionals will be sought in the next six months to evaluate the impact of this multi-agency work.



4. Developing family feedback: Participation Opportunities:

We have listened to our Young Experts and communicated with children through WhatsApp messages, voice notes, phone calls, letters, and emails as well as continuing activity days and offering one-to-one participation opportunities.

During our activity day in October half term 2023 half term, nine children with child protection plans enjoyed bowling and a meal with their conference review officer. The Feedback they shared included evaluating the practice tools and providing their views about the participation opportunities they have been offered.

The children evaluated the Child Protection animation and said they had been shown the animation, and that it explains who attends child protection conferences. The children said seeing the Child Protection animation, alongside, a discussion with their social worker or conference review officer about participating in their child protection conference was the most helpful way to encourage attendance.

The children attending the bowling activity day also evaluated the Roles and Responsibilities Index and the practice tool 'Co-producing Summaries with Children'. Feedback was that these practice tools were a good way to act on what young people are saying and change their experiences of professionals for the better.

Children attending the activity day said
(about child protection conferences):

**“I really liked it”
and
“It made me feel
less nervous”**

The families attending shared that the day was enjoyable and one commented that it allows them to spend time together doing something fun as a family, which they would not get to do otherwise.



Participation Opportunities:

In October 2023 a go-karting activity day took place for seven children in care who enjoyed this activity alongside their Independent Reviewing Officers. The children also evaluated the letter inviting children to participate in their meetings, the Roles and Responsibilities Index and the guide to co-producing summaries with children and young people.

The children provided suggestions for the design of the practice tools, and all agreed that it is important that a trusted adult, such as a Social Worker or carer shares the tools with them especially the invitation letter, so there can be a discussion about this. As well as sharing valuable feedback about the development of practice tools, the young people had a great time together.

Children attending the activity day said:

“I had so much fun, I come a lot with my foster carer and it’s nice to come as a group too.”

“I’ve never been before but always wanted to go, had so much fun!”

“I can’t wait to drive so for me I just didn’t want to stop.”



Twelve children with a child in need plan have been offered activities of their choice by the service development officer and the allocated social workers. Out of the twelve children, six confirmed their attendance at an activity day but due to various reasons only one attended. Children have subsequently told us that they can find group activities challenging to attend.

Learning from this we will be continue offering one to one participation opportunities to 14 children with child in need plans in the next six months. It is recognised that individual children and young people will have a personal preference for what activities and feedback opportunities they enjoy. We are therefore focused on getting to know young people and working with them in a way that supports their choices in the way they engage and share their views. Children told us they thought it was important to have opportunities for them to be invited to even if they don’t get there on the day.

In conjunction with Early Help, we identified that around 20% of children with a child in need plan access BACE activities. Opportunities for children in need to access BACE and positive activities are promoted throughout participation work.

Service Area Updates

Carer support team:

You said:

Children and young people living with special guardianship carers told practitioners in the carer support team that they would like the opportunity to meet with other children who cannot live with their parents and live with grandparents, aunts, uncles, and ex-foster carers as they often haven't met anyone in the same situation as them.

Special Guardianship carers told practitioners in the carer support team that they wanted more opportunities to get together as Special Guardianship families in a fun and relaxed environment.

We did:

An inclusive family gala for Special Guardianship carers and their families took place in the July 2023. Special Guardians who attend the regular special guardian brunches provided feedback about and co-produced the activities and entertainment provided on the day. The event mirrored the children in care summer celebration and was well received by all who attended.

44 Special Guardians, children and young people attended the event. They enjoyed a bouncy castle, balloon artists, football and archery activities, crafts, cake decorating, food which was described by children as 'yummy' and an ice cream van.

Youth Justice Service:

A fourth successful residential programme for children and young people, aged 14-16 years old and subject to Youth Justice Orders, also, took place in summer 2023.

This program was established in October 2019 with the following objectives: to divert Children and Young People from offending and help regulate their behaviour, develop their resilience and strengths, boost their self-esteem by

offering them new opportunities for personal growth and learning, develop their own skills with the aim to encourage them to be our local mentors for young people within the borough, complete the requirements of their Orders, develop a trusting relationship with the staff, and for them to experience positive child-centred activities and experiential learning during the summer holidays.

Seven young people joined the Residential Programme and have none of these young people have been reverted to the Youth Justice System. Two of them have become our local youth mentors after successfully completing their Youth Justice Orders. Young people had the opportunity to learn basic life skills such as cooking, food and hygiene, reflexology massage, problem-solving skills and leadership and teamwork through participation in indoor and outdoor activities.



Service Area Updates

Barnet Integrated Clinical Service (BICS)

BICS have a dedicated child participation officer who has supported opportunities for family feedback and utilising this feedback to co-produce service development. There has been some real enthusiasm from young people in participating in this work, and feedback from them has led to changes in the content of support groups run for young people. Group facilitators adapt their delivery to what works for young people.

Young people were also consulted about the BICS logo, and workshops took place where young people shared their views about the logo and how it could be improved. Feedback included requests for a 'nice pop of colour' and for inviting colours and a more eye-catching design. The new BICS logo incorporated this feedback and is now in use across the service.



BIC's co-produced a series of social media campaigns with children and young people which resulted in dynamic and exciting digital content to promote the service. The launch for this campaign (Let's Talk About It) was, also, child-led and their input and participation has resulted in a meaningful process, outcome and event.

Private Fostering:

Feedback from children and young people living in private fostering arrangements has been sought using video feedback to capture the discussion between the private fostering social worker and the young person. This feedback is used to evaluate the support provided to these children.



Service Area Updates

Strategy, Insight and Commissioning Service:

We were so proud of our Young Commissioners leading the first session at the Staff Conference in November 2023. The young commissioners programme is an opportunity for young people to work with Barnet's Commissioners to learn and develop key skills as well as have direct involvement with the services we provide to young people in Barnet. The programme enables young people to gain several AQA Unit Awards and participate in one-to-one training opportunities.

Our practice principle of partnership working, participation and co-production has been embedded within the service. For example, the young carers strategy was co-produced with children and young people via three focused groups. Looking ahead, Barnet Carers Centre is establishing a Young Carers Steering Group, providing ongoing oversight for the strategy.



Young Expert's Evaluation:

Our Young experts have evaluated our responses to their views and suggestions from the June 2023 Family feedback report during the activity days and one- to- one sessions described above. They have, also, co-produced the practice tools discussed in this report and have helpfully co-produced the design of the report. Here are some of their views:

Young Expert 15 years old:

"I like the report, it's needed, but I think there's one or two things that would need to make more sense if children were to understand all of it.

I think it's important that professionals use their real face (for the roles and responsibilities index), because it means that we actually get to know the person who knows us.

Building relationships is important."

Young Expert 16 years old:

"Loved summaries, not case summaries, makes me feel you're trying to listen. Like the who's who tool kit however I think professionals should use their real face especially when dealing with young children due to anxiety (children may feel about who the professionals are).

Activity days are important to continue, and the one-to-ones are better because the families shouldn't be exposed by being in groups with other families."

Young Expert 16 years old:

"BICS new Logo design with young people is much nicer and all work for young people should be made like this."

Young Expert 14 years old:

"Enjoyed Go-karting, I think we should get a lot more access like this."

Young Expert 14 years old:

"The feedback in the report made sense, through my experience. I haven't dealt with everything in the service but what other kids are saying I would agree, that's my opinion.

The design of the document is nice, but more importantly it matches with the other stuff (Child protection animation, practice tools). I like the blue in the other version of the report but for me, everything needs to match."

Feedback from Children and Young People

Feedback from children and young people continues to be sought across service areas. As our practice principles become more embedded the impact of the principles of child-centred practice, partnership working, participation and co-production can be seen in the increase in feedback being sought by and provided directly to practitioners.

Whilst the family feedback form continues to be promoted and provides the opportunity for feedback about service areas to be shared anonymously, the last 6 months have seen children and young people preferring to provide feedback to the practitioner working directly with them, or the practitioner's manager. This correlates with children and young people reporting that they feel that they are listened to and have positive relationships with the practitioners supporting them.

Feedback from children and young people suggests that practitioners building positive and trusting professional relationships is a strength in our workforce, with young people feeling that they have at least one professional that they trust and that their voice is being heard:

"I was very scared, but as soon as time passed and I got to know who they were, (Social worker) I was so happy they were in my life."

I&P

"You were so kind and had such an approachable, talkative and warm demeanour... I can' put into words how much you helped so thanks!"

DATS

"R is genuine, a really good person and she gets along with young people, all my previous social workers I didn't like but R is really good she kept it real with me all the time and is always honest"

REACH

Feedback from Children and Young People

The feedback from children and young people shows that they view the support they have received as helpful and having made a positive difference to them:

"I liked my social worker she helped me a lot and because of her I have made positive changes and not getting into trouble like I was before."

REACH

"I really likes R she is really helpful and was really nice and I appreciate all her support there is so many good stuff I can't say it all but there was a lot." REACH

"Thank you for all the support it made a big difference. I really feel like since I've been speaking with you guys, my family has been a lot calmer, and we now go out and do things as a family which we never did before."

I&P

"The African drumming made me feel like a real star." BACE.

More effective partnership working between children's social care and other professionals has been highlighted in the feedback from children and young people, with one sharing:

"I was really scared to get back into school, but my social worker helped me make friends with one of the teachers and have had a great time at school since." DATS

Feedback from Parents and carers

Positive working relationships with professionals have been highlighted in feedback from parents and carers, with parents and carers feeling listened to, understood, and supported:

"I feel like the workers I work with know how to keep a conversation going. I feel like I can speak to someone which is good."

DATS

"Your constant pressure and persistence to make sure things get done for her are probably the only reason we are where we are with her assessments and progress in school. A also has a lot of trust in you which is great to see because her trust with Barnet after the last social worker experience was non-existent, as was mine. Really big thank you for all your help so far." I&P

"J is the only person who took time to get to know my child and me, and tried to see how we could be supported in the toughest times in our life...I felt held, listened to and respected." I&P

"I found you very calm, empathic, understanding, accepting and supportive. And you were willing to deviate from the specifics of the course to allow me to talk to you about the wider issues I have been facing." Child and Family Early Help

Feedback from Parents and carers

Feedback from parents and carers shows that they have found the support provided to them helpful, responsive, and timely:

"I appreciate all the support the service helped me a lot when I was in hospital and my family it was really good." REACH

"Honestly, for M you are truly her friend and for me you are God's answer to my prayers." REACH.

"I just want to say that A and B have given me great support at this stressful time for me and I just want it recognised how much it means to me to finally have the support that I have had from both of them they have been fantastic." Fostering support team and Child in Care team.

"S has been a massive help and support so far and has done a lot more in the past few months than anyone else we have worked with. My son is now back in school which seemed like it would never happen and my daughter is also doing well. It's all round been a pleasure having him help my family." I&P

"It was altogether perfect how you manage challenging behaviour with teenagers. Will put into practice in daily life. Thank-you!" Child and Family Early Help.

"Thank you so much for supporting me today because I was very stressed and worried about my kids. Thank you so much for giving me hope!" MASH

"More support for housing and more money for clothes and other things." REACH

The need for the Roles and Responsibility's Index to be embedded and used to support families understand the roles and responsibilities of different professionals was highlighted in the feedback:

Summary

This report outlines the progress we have made on actions (set out in our previous report) and the next steps in incorporating feedback from children, young people, and their families into service development.

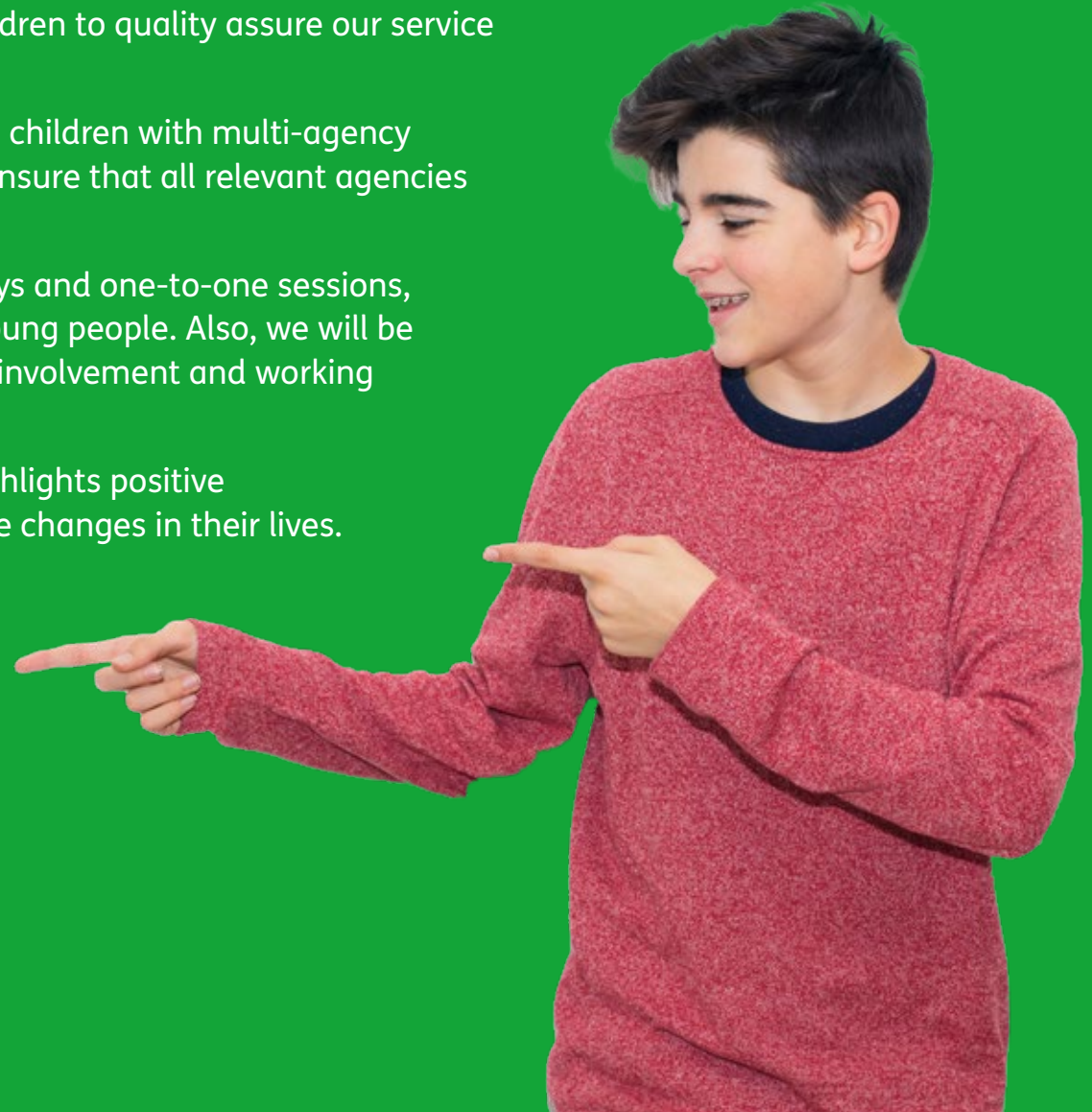
Our group of Young Experts evaluating our responses to family feedback and co-producing our practice tools has been invaluable. The opportunities for children to quality assure our service developments is a process we plan to build on.

The workforce development team has shared feedback from children with multi-agency partners and the ongoing sharing of feedback is a focus to ensure that all relevant agencies can respond to the views of children.

A variety of participation opportunities, including activity days and one-to-one sessions, have been provided to gather feedback from children and young people. Also, we will be working to consolidate the ways we are encouraging family involvement and working in partnership with parents.

Feedback from children, young people, and their families highlights positive relationships with professionals, helpful support, and positive changes in their lives.

This report reflects the ongoing commitment to listening to and incorporating feedback into service development to ensure that the voices of children, young people, and their families are heard, valued, and acted on.



Next Steps

1. To embed the use of the co-produced practice tools.

The practice tools were shared with the workforce in December 2023. Workforce leads will support the embedding of the tools in practice. Good practice examples will be shared with the workforce bi-monthly, along with links to all direct work tools.

Feedback from children and young people and quality assurance activity will be used to evaluate how successfully these have been embedded into practice. This includes evaluating the impact of the use of the tools on how children and young people experience professional support alongside any impact on the number of children participating in, attending, or chairing their meetings.

2. To collaborate with Children and Young People to share feedback in creative ways.

Managers and practitioners to continue to collaborate with children to explore digital and creative ways for their feedback to be shared. This includes feedback gathered during one-to-one participation opportunities, activity days, and feedback provided directly to practitioners.



3. Further embed the role of the young experts in co-producing and evaluating our service developments.

Workforce and Safeguarding Leads will continue to develop and encourage the role of Young Experts to increase the representation of the voices heard.

This report introduces the ‘Young Experts Evaluation’ of how well we have responded to family feedback. This evaluation will be included in future family feedback reports as an important way of not only hearing the voices of children and young people but, also, supporting them to measure their influence and see their impact.

4. To offer participation activities to 12 children with child in need plans in the next 6 months.

Service development officer to work alongside practitioners and children to identify what participation activity is best for each child based on their individual interests. BACE activities will be promoted with families to support children to access longer term activities of interest to them.

5. Using the Roles and Responsibilities Index and children’s co-produced summaries to strengthen partnership collaboration.

Workforce leads to establish feedback loops with other relevant professionals on an ongoing basis. This will include the Young Experts evaluation of how they experience other professionals following the sharing of the practice tools.



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