

Family Services

Annual SEND Conference

2020

0-25 Social Work in 2020

- **This year has presented very challenging times for all those receiving services and also for those providing services.**
- **Today you will hear from the Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), the Early Help Service, the Short Break service and from the 0-25 Disability Social Work Team.**
- **We would like to take you through how as a collective service we have navigated through periods of lockdown and some of the lessons we are learning along the way.**

0-25 Services - Initial COVID-19 Response

- The pandemic crisis galvanised Family Services to consider how we could continue to provide an ‘as best possible’ service.
- The 0-25 service made a call to every family known to the service.
- Gathered information and recorded on every file how to manage if a parent/carer/household member became ill with contact details of emergency support networks.
- Weekly catch-up phone calls to the most vulnerable families.
- Review of care packages – what had to change to meet new circumstantial need
- Approving flexible arrangements – care packages and short breaks
- Informal responses from staff - ‘above and beyond’.

Challenges for the Service

- **How to make quick and responsive changes to the way we work**
- **Gathering information and statistical data required for planning**
- **How to co-ordinate with other agencies who were also adjusting**
- **How to check in with all the families known to the service at once**
- **Talking to families about their contingency plans for care**
- **How to support our staff to effectively support the children and their families**
- **What to do if community and commissioned services closed or carers were self isolating**
- **Dealing with uncertainty and anxiety**

Challenges for staff

- **Working virtually from home – would the IT equipment enable this?**
- **Some staff within high risk groups and were shielding.**
- **Staff with parental responsibilities – children at home and home schooling.**
- **Much harder to get a sense of what was happening across the community**
- **More difficult to access informal support for families**
- **Understanding high levels of anxiety and managing emotional wellbeing of colleagues and own families.**
- **Flexibility and acceptance that all were balancing home and work and doing their best. Whatsapp/Teams/Park catch ups**
- **Senior managers were in almost daily contact with hospitalised staff member and those managing complex family situation.**

Multi-agency initiatives

- **Resources for Autism delivery of activity/support packs to families.**
- **Referral of families to family support initiatives – the Open Space Scheme**
- **Multi-agency working such as with SEN to provide support during the school day – especially for key professionals.**
- **Barnet and Southgate college offered capacity to ‘not on roll’ young people where a parent was a key worker.**

What this meant for statutory services to our children and young people

- For the children in our care there was disruption to face to face visits and contact with family. Virtual visits & contact was organised.
- Additional funding provided to those young people in supported living and unable to attend education.
- Managing safeguarding worries where visits may have increased the health risk to our highly vulnerable group of children. Where possible children were seen virtually but alone.
- OT assessments continued through virtual visits conducted by the family.
- With some loosening of restrictions some face to face visits over fences, in gardens, in parks have started taking place.

Lessons we are learning

- **You, the parents and carers have shown remarkable strength and resilience and continue to do so.**
- **We can act decisively in the face of a crisis and flexibly in the context of a changing landscape.**
- **Engaging with the virtual world is less foreign now. In some instances meetings are better attended than had been previously.**
- **That being part of a team is crucial to our well being – and our own experience allows us to reflect on how isolating this experience has been for so many families we serve.**
- **This specific crisis has affected us all and Barnet families have shown an understanding of the challenges faced by professionals. We too have felt supported by you.**