

# Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Newsletter

## Barnet Virtual SEND Conference

10, 11 and 12 November 2020

We are delighted that our annual SEND Conference will be held virtually during November this year. This is a free conference for Barnet parents, carers and professionals that has been jointly organised by education, health, social care and representatives of the Barnet SEND parent community.

The conference has been developed to ensure the Barnet community has an opportunity to gain greater awareness of SEND developments, structures and services in Barnet from key professionals and senior leaders across education, health and social care. There will also be a range of exciting workshops for parents, carers and professionals to join.

The conference aims to:

- provide an update on the developments from education, health and social care, since the last conference in June 2019 with regards to meeting the needs of children and young people (0-25) with SEND in Barnet
- offer a question and answer panel to provide an opportunity for parents / carers and professionals to pose questions and hear responses from senior professionals across Barnet SEND services
- provide further insight into Barnet's Local Offer and how this can be accessed and utilised by both parents/carers and professionals
- hear from Barnet's Parent/Carer Forum (BPCF) about their role and work they are currently undertaking
- offer an opportunity for a range of services to share key information

## Barnet Virtual SEND Conference - How to book your place

If you would like to book a place at the SEND Conference, click on the following link to complete our registration form:

[Please click here to book your place and workshops](#)

Details can also be found on our Barnet Local Offer: <https://www.barnetlocaloffer.org.uk>



## Our Keynote Speaker

This year our Keynote Speaker is Professor Barry Carpenter, CBE, OBE, PhD, who in a career spanning over 40 years has held a variety of leadership positions in schools and local authorities. He is the UK's first Professor in Mental Health in Education, a Chair created for him at Oxford Brookes University. Barry Carpenter is Honorary Professor at universities in the UK, Ireland, Germany and Australia. He has been a Fellow of the University of Oxford. In July 2020 he was awarded the Distinguished Fellowship of the Chartered College of Teaching, for his leadership of the Education field during the pandemic. Barry also brings his perspective as a father to his child with special educational needs.

In his keynote speech 'The Recovery Curriculum: Reigniting Learning', Barry will share his extensive knowledge and expertise to consider:

- the emotional impact of the pandemic on children
- the 'loss' experienced and how we might rebuild emotional resilience in children
- the aims and purpose of a Recovery Curriculum
- the process of reigniting learning in the disengaged
- the extra considerations needed for children with SEND, especially Autism
- resources to support children and aid teaching

There will also be the opportunity for a short Question & Answer session.

*Samantha Rothwell*  
Inclusion Advisory Teacher (IAT)



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## The Autism Plan

The Autism Plan has been signed off by the Children's Partnership Board, which includes local health, education, social care and voluntary partnership alongside the Barnet Parent Carer Forum and the Council's children's committee.

Although formal sign off had been delayed, we didn't wait to put some things into action already. Delivery of the plan will be overseen by the SEND Development Group and SEND Partnership Board, both of which have parent-carer representatives on. We will also keep you updated on what is happening. Thank you for all your help, support and challenge over the past few months – it has really been appreciated.

*Claire O'Callaghan*  
Strategy and Insight Officer, Family Services

## Introducing the 0-25 Specialist Autism Team

Alongside the implementation of the London Borough of Barnet Autism strategy a new social work team has been developed within the 0-25 Disabilities Service. We use the term 'Specialist' Autism Team to describe the response needed for a specific group of children and young people who, alongside an autism diagnosis, experience severely compromised mental health. This is likely to result in challenging or worrying behaviours that require a multi-agency team response. It is anticipated that many of the children and young people will be or have been in a mainstream school setting but their autism, combined with mental health complexities, could place them at risk of entering residential care or a mental health hospital setting. This group of children and young people is distinct from the wider 0-25 disability social work team who work with young people who have a severe and profound disability combined with their autism diagnosis.

### Who are we?

The team has a manager, Graeme Baylis, who is also the 0-25 disability service strategic lead; an Advanced Practitioner, Aisha Tijani, who has worked in the area of disabilities for some years and who has extensive experience working with our young people in transition (16 + age group); and a newly qualified Social Worker, Geoffrey Kidega. Geoffrey recently joined us having undertaken his master's degree in Social Work with a special interest in autism. He has also worked in a voluntary capacity as a 'parent to parent' advisor with the National Autistic Society. Our next planned recruit will be a Support Practitioner.

### Team Objective

Our primary aim is to support children and young people to remain in the community and living with their family. We undertake detailed assessments and where possible ensure children and their parent/carers are involved in this process. If the risk of remaining at home is too high then we consider a community placement depending on age and circumstances. If a young person is hospitalised, under the Mental Health Act, we ensure procedures and reviews are being adhered to and attend all relevant meetings and visit according to legal frameworks. We work as part of the Multi-Disciplinary Team to ensure the best plans are in place for young people being discharged from hospital. Our ethos is to place the needs, safety and wishes of children and young people at the forefront of our practice.

### Who are the Multi-Disciplinary Team?

We, as Social Workers will work closely with Mental Health practitioners (Clinical/therapists/nurses/family support workers) in the community and in secure hospital settings. In addition, and to ensure joint planning we link with the SEN service, the Autism Advisory teaching team and SENDCOs and we have access to Social Care based Occupational Therapists for advice and information on how best to support our young people, including appropriate housing. We have good relationships with the voluntary sector, for example Resources for Autism and MENCAP, and there are occasions when we may need the support of the police. It is crucial that young people have representation; we encourage them to have an Advocate and will make referrals on their behalf. Ensuring that parents/carers are fully involved with the intervention and planning is seen as central to what we do, and the Social Worker encourages open and regular dialogue with parents/carers.

### Seeking solutions

As a newly formed team our expertise is evolving. We have discovered patterns emerging; such as that the majority of the children we work with have a late diagnosis of autism, are in the adolescent age group, struggle to accept their diagnosis, may not have an EHCP and refuse to engage with professionals. This presents us with particular challenges requiring new solutions. Young autistic people may also be overrepresented in the youth justice system and we have linked up with the Youth Offending Service to explore this further. We intend to work closely with parents/carers from the Barnet Parent/Carers Forum who have a special interest in autism; to participate in special interest groups such as the Leading-Edge Group for autism and with autism specific training events to support this aim.

If you require further information then please email me - [graeme.baylis@barnet.gov.uk](mailto:graeme.baylis@barnet.gov.uk)

*Graeme Baylis*  
Strategic Manager, 0-25 Disabilities Service



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## Short Breaks

The Short Breaks Team would like to provide you with some information about what we have been doing behind the scenes over the past seven months. We want to ensure that everyone has been able to access some services and get the support on offer during these unprecedented times.

We have been working closely with our providers to keep you updated, via the website and the Barnet Parent carers Forum whether virtually or in person, during the initial lockdown and beyond. We recognise that many of you have not felt comfortable in accessing community based activities and that a lot of our providers were closed and unable to deliver services or had limited services. Because of this we offered families the option of using £150 from their personal budgets and short breaks allocations to purchase educational games and play activities for their children.

As we embark on another lockdown Barnet Family Service are again offering parents who have opted for the Short Breaks Personal Budget for their children, £150 of their child's remaining budget to be spent on educational and play equipment/resources during November. We recognise that many families will be unable to go out or will need to isolate during this period and hope that this will provide you with flexibility in recognition of the pressures that many of you may face during this period of time. The £150 can be used to purchase board games, interactive toys and garden play equipment to entertain your child. Please be advised that this is not an additional payment to your existing allocation, this will be deducted from your allocation, reducing your Short Break entitlement accordingly.

For parents who use Short Break services there have been offers of virtual-based activities, whilst other providers are offering face-to-face activities. It is possible that we may have challenges in delivery of commissioned short breaks in respect of their ability to offer a direct service. However as soon as we receive any information and updates about any planned activities, this will be communicated to the parent forum and via our website.

We are in the process of transferring from our current Personal Budget card provider. Unfortunately, this means that we are unable, currently, to offer the payment option to families with commissioned short breaks unless you already have a Personal Budget card. We are anticipating that we be ready to begin using the new cards in January 2021.

If you are experiencing any challenges using/accessing Short Breaks please contact the team via email: [short.breaks@barnet.gov.uk](mailto:short.breaks@barnet.gov.uk)

Please stay safe and thank you all for your continued support and patience.

*The Short Breaks Team - Carla & Marina*

## Early Help

The Early Help Service would like to remind parents that they can access the children's centres webpages, Barnet youth and the 0-19 webpage which has the time tables of positive activities/events/programmes and is regularly updated via the following links:

- [www.Barnet.gov.uk/0-19](http://www.Barnet.gov.uk/0-19)
- [www.barnetyouth.uk](http://www.barnetyouth.uk)

## Barnet Outdoor Spaces Scheme

During the spring lockdown the Outdoor Spaces Scheme was developed to meet the needs of families with children who have an Autism diagnosis or a Learning Disability and limited or no access to a garden. In line with public health guidelines the space was 'safe' with no contact between individual families and stringent cleaning taking place after one family left and the next arrived. For those without access to transport this was provided by the SEN transport team at no cost to the family. This has proven very successful with a total of 110 bookings for 53 families.

With the deteriorating weather and the return of children to school this term, interest has declined. As we are now faced with further restrictions on movement we are hoping to rebrand this provision to the Open Spaces Scheme with the addition of indoor based opportunities. The scheme co-ordinator, Lizzy Galbraith, is exploring options with the Greentop Centre who are building a summerhouse to offer shelter, as well as indoor venues including Unitas and local swimming pools. Once we have an update from these providers this will be advertised on the Local Offer.

In the meantime we are still offering sessions at Greentops (NW9) where there are two separate spaces available on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays 1.00-2.30pm and on Sunday afternoons.

These can be booked via the [outdoorspaces@barnet.gov.uk](mailto:outdoorspaces@barnet.gov.uk) mailbox.



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## Revised SEN and Disabilities Strategy 2021 – 2024

We are revising our SEND Strategy (2017 -2020) drawing on a number of sources of information, including feedback from children and young people with SEND and their parent carers, professionals, self-evaluations, local and national data, and visits from Department for Education, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission(CQC).

The SEND Strategy is an important 'driver' for agreeing priorities and actions with all partners for the next three years. It is for everyone involved with SEND, including families, headteachers, governors, SENCO's, professionals across health, education and social care and the voluntary sector. It covers the Local Area of Barnet, and includes the local authority, all schools and settings in Barnet, the clinical commissioning group (CCG) and specialist health services.

We will be consulting on the following priorities, as well as the principles and next steps at the end of November:

Priority 1: To ensure that we are working in a Family Friendly way and co-production is central to our work.

Priority 2: To minimise the long-term impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the attainment, achievement and psychological wellbeing of children and young people with SEND.

Priority 3: To ensure sufficient high-quality provision in borough for children and young people with complex needs, including Autism.

Priority 4: To ensure effective joint commissioning with clear pathways of support from Early Years through to adulthood.

Priority 5: In line with Resilient schools, develop greater confidence, skills and competencies in mainstream schools to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND.

Priority 6: Champion the educational progress and attainment of pupils with SEND.

Priority 7: Develop resilience in young people with SEND to promote independence.

The SEND Strategy (2021 – 2024) and the Action Plan will be published in early Spring. The consultation will be on the Barnet website and the Local Offer website at the end of November.

*Helen Phelan*  
Director SEND & Inclusion



## Barnet Parent Carer Forum (BPCF) Update

The BPCF has been very active during the past year and particularly since the restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Since the lockdown was imposed at the end of March we have been busy keeping our members informed about the changes in the way services are being delivered. We have kept in regular contact with our SEND families to find out what concerns they have and made sure any issues have been fed back to the Local Authority.

Some of the ways we have been engaging with the Local Authority to represent our families have been contributing to the development of the CAMHS crisis offer, the home learning offer and return to school support, the remote therapies offer, short breaks and the "open spaces" initiative, and very recently the Ofsted assurance visit and review of the pandemic arrangements by the Department for Education.

The upcoming virtual SEND conference has been coproduced with BPCF and this has all been in addition to our existing commitments and getting to grips with a virtual way of working! We would love to welcome new parent carers to our membership and also to expand and diversify our steering group, so join us and have your say!

*Teresa Bull*  
BPCF Chair



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## Ofsted and Care Quality Commission (CQC) joint visit to Barnet Local Area

Ofsted and CQC are undertaking a series of visits of 18 Local areas over the next 6 months to understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children and young people with SEND and their families, learn from what has happened and identify opportunities for improvement.

The visits are not inspections, and participation has been voluntary.

The purpose of the visits are for Local Areas and Services to understand more fully what has worked well to support children and young people with SEND and their families, what the challenges have been and to identify opportunities for improvement that address the challenges faced by children and young people with SEND.

The focus for Inspectors is on access to the right support at the right time, Co-production and engagement with children and young people with SEND and their families and collaboration across agencies to understand children and young people's emerging and existing SEND needs.

The visits are taking place in three waves, with each wave consisting of six local areas. Having volunteered to take part, Barnet was selected in the first wave. The visit took place over three days, 12 – 14 October and the Inspection team was made up of two Ofsted inspectors and one CQC inspector.

The findings from each wave of visits will be aggregated into national reports to support whole-system learning. These reports will be published on Ofsted's and CQC's websites.

You can find more information about how inspectors carried out the visit at:  
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/interim-phase-area-send>

### Visit Summary note from the Inspectors

The Summary note containing the findings from the Ofsted/CQC visit and the emerging priorities for education, health and social care [can be found here](#).

These priorities will be taken forward through the revised SEND Strategy (2021 – 2024). Following consultation on the draft revised SEND Strategy, an Action Plan will be developed with partners in early Spring 2021. The revised SEND Strategy and the Action Plan will be published on the Local Offer website.

*Helen Phelan*  
*Director SEND & Inclusion*

