

	Brent Health and Wellbeing Board 2 April 2025
	Report from the Chair of Brent Children's Trust Corporate Director, Children and Young People
Brent Children's Trust 6 monthly progress report	

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	N/A
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open
List of Appendices:	Appendix A - Governance Chart
Background Papers:	None
Contact Officer(s): <small>(Name, Title, Contact Details)</small>	Wendy Marchese Strategic Partnerships Manager Wendy.Marchese@brent.gov.uk

1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1. The Brent Children's Trust (BCT) is a strategic partnership group with the primary function to coordinate and steer the joint strategic direction for the delivery of local authority and health partner integrated services for children and young people in Brent.
- 1.2. As the BCT is a strategic partnership group, all operational activities sit with the individual organisations represented on BCT.
- 1.3. The BCT has a strategic relationship with the Brent Health and Wellbeing Board and Brent Integrated Care Partnership (ICP).
- 1.4. The Health and Wellbeing Board maintain oversight of BCT activity (see **Appendix A** for full governance structure). As part of this governance arrangement the BCT provides the HWB with a regular update report.
- 1.5. This paper provides an update of the BCT work programme covering the period November 2024 to March 2025.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1. The Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to note the strategic oversight activity of the BCT for the period November 2024 to March 2025.

3.0 Detail and Contribution to Borough Plan Priorities and Strategic Context

The Brent Children's Trust

- 3.1. The BCT aims to strengthen integration and collaborative working between the Council and health service partners through a shared goal of improving the health and wellbeing of children, young people and their families in Brent.
- 3.2. The Chair of the BCT is the Corporate Director, Children and Young People, Brent Council. The Vice Chair is the Brent Borough Director, NWL ICP.
- 3.3. The full membership of the BCT consists of:

Organisation	Role
Brent Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Corporate Director of Children and Young People (Chair)➤ Director of Public Health➤ Public Health Consultant➤ Director Education, Partnerships and Strategy, CYP➤ Head of Looked After Children and Permanency➤ Head of Inclusion CYP➤ Head of Early Help, CYP➤ Head of Localities, CYP
Brent Integrated Care Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Brent Integrated Care Partnership Director (Vice Chair)➤ Brent Borough Director➤ Clinical Lead for Children and Young People (CYP)➤ Head of Mental Health, Learning Disabilities and Autism, Brent
Health Service Providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Central London Community Healthcare NHS Trust➤ Central North West London Mental Health Care NHS Trust➤ London North West University Healthcare NHS Trust
Community and Voluntary Sector <i>(as of September 2024)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Chief Executive Officer of CVS Brent

- 3.4. The BCT recognises the importance of ensuring the education sector has a voice at the strategic level and will continue to explore the most appropriate way to ensure that the education sector is represented within the Trust.

3.5. The responsibilities of the BCT include:

- Be responsible for developing a joint vision and strategy for improving outcomes for children, young people and their families in Brent.
- Work in partnership with all key delivery agencies (public, private and voluntary) to ensure delivery of key priorities and associated aims, targets and inspection criteria.
- Set a clear framework for strategic planning and commissioning promoting integration and collaborative working between all partners.
- Monitor an agreed suite of performance information, including national and local, and quantitative and qualitative indicators in conjunction with other partnership boards.
- Ensure that priorities are informed by the views of children, young people, their families, data on service demand and the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA).
- Develop initiatives between the council and health service partners to improve health and wellbeing for children, young people and their families focussing on tackling Brent's health inequalities.
- Keep the workforce informed and involved, providing clear direction and identifying opportunities for joint training and development when appropriate.
- Ensure that legislation relating to services for children and young people is implemented in the borough.
- Ensure close links with the Health and Wellbeing Board, Integrated Care Board, the Safeguarding Children Partnership and other key partnerships as necessary.
- Share good practice emerging from the work of the Trust.

3.6. The BCT also has the responsibility to oversee and drive the partnership activity responding to the four Brent ICP priorities that focusses on children and young people services. The BCT provides regular progress updates to the Integrated Care Partnership Board.

3.7. The BCT has strategic oversight of three partnership groups tasked with implementing specific priorities across the partnership. These are:

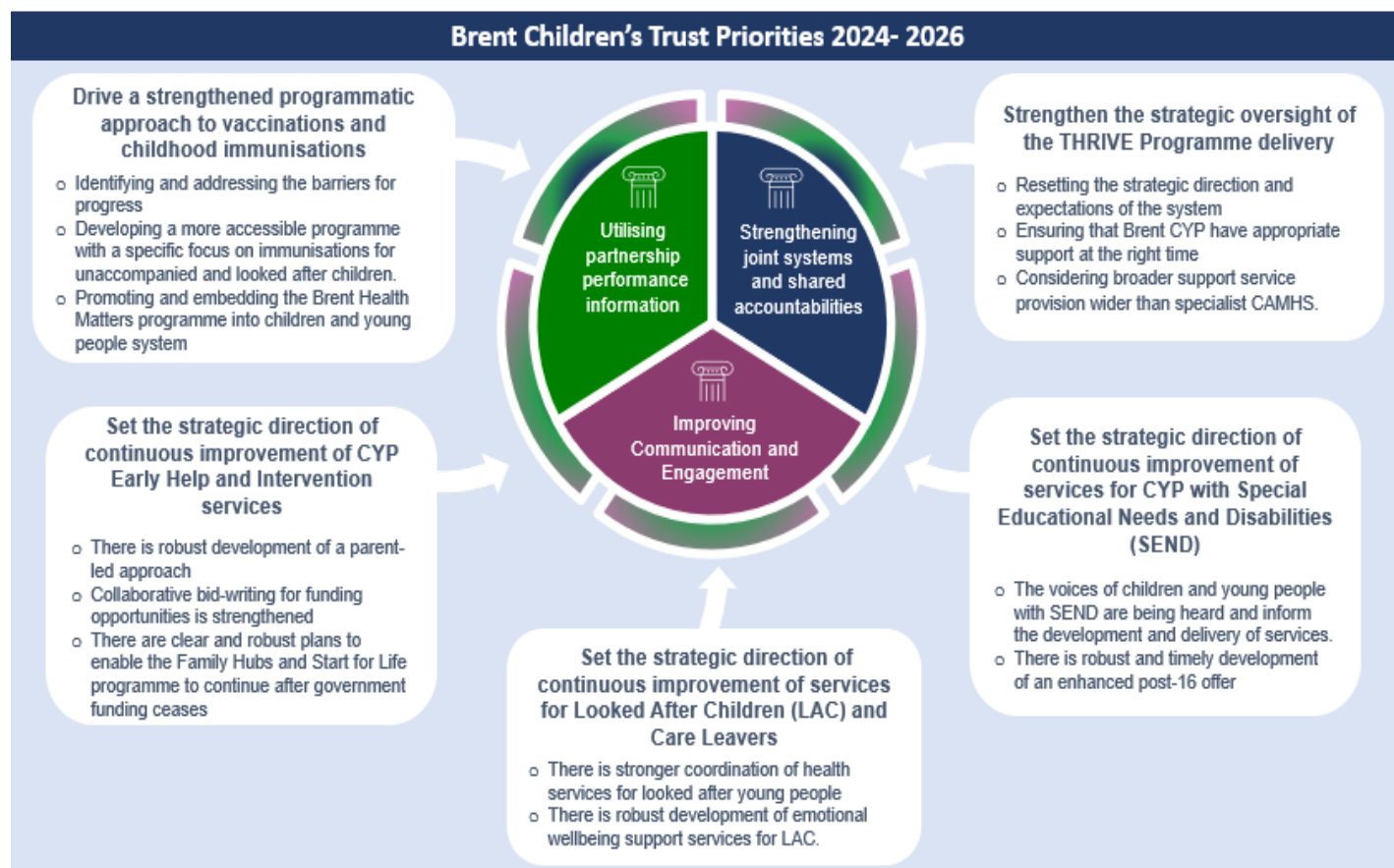
Partnership Group	Purpose
Inclusion Strategic Board	➤ To drive the development, implementation and success of the Brent SEND Strategy.

Early Help and Prevention Group	➤ To drive the development, implementation and success of the Supporting Families programme and Youth Strategy.
Looked After Children and Care Leavers Partnership Group	➤ To drive a range of initiatives that reflect both national and local policies and best practice to improve outcomes for children in care and care leavers.

Brent Children's Trust Priorities 2024-2026

- 3.8. In May 2024, the BCT agreed a refreshed strategic vision and set of priority areas of focus for 2024-2026.
- 3.9. The BCT have identified five priority areas of focus that will drive the work programme for 2024-2026.
1. Drive a strengthened programmatic approach to vaccinations and childhood immunisations
 2. Strengthen the strategic oversight of the THRIVE programme delivery.
 3. Set the strategic direction of continuous improvement of Early Help and Intervention services.
 4. Set the strategic direction of continuous improvement of services for Looked After Children (LAC) and Care Leavers.
 5. Set the strategic direction of continuous improvement of services for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).
- 3.10. These priority areas are each underpinned by three success pillars:
1. Utilising partnership performance information
 2. Strengthening joint systems and shared accountabilities
 3. Improving communication and engagement

Brent Children's Trust Priorities 2024- 2026



3.11. The BCT developed an activity plan to enable the BCT to track the agreed partnership activity for each of the five priority areas of focus, this plan is updated every two months and continues to be reviewed during each BCT meeting.

BCT strategic oversight activity during November 2024 to March 2025

3.12. The BCT meets every two months to review progress against the identified priority areas of focus and consider any emerging local and national issues.

3.13. During the period November 2024 to March 2025, the BCT met three times on 26 November 2024, 4 February 2025, and 24 March 2025.

3.14. As part of the meetings, the BCT considered and provided a steer on the progress on the following areas:

- Care Leavers and LAC update - revised Brent Council Care Leavers Offer and Charter
- Inclusion – Implementation of SEND Strategy 2021-2025
- SEND Inspection
- Brent Carers Strategy – Focus on Young Carers
- Analysing data and intelligence

Care Leavers and LAC Offer and Charter

- 3.15. In November 2024, the BCT received an update on the revised Care Leaver Local Offer and Care Leavers Charter, which were presented and endorsed by the Brent Council Corporate Parenting Committee (CPC) in October 2024.
- 3.16. The revised Care Leaver Local Offer builds on the existing framework established in 2018 that was refreshed in 2022. It offers comprehensive support for care leavers aged 18 to 25, with key changes introduced in this latest update.
- 3.17. The key changes aim to provide a more supportive transition into adulthood and independent living and include:
- Access to digital support, such as the Digital Resident Support Fund, which provides devices and 12-month free internet connectivity. Additionally, care leavers claiming universal credit can apply for free internet access through TalkTalk.
 - Expanding mentorship programs
 - Offering a rent deposit scheme for those moving into private accommodation.
 - The increase in the leaving care allowance to £3000, or £3250 for single parents, to help care leavers furnish their homes.
 - Additionally, allowances for festivals and birthdays will rise in line with similar London authorities.
 - Care leavers will also be eligible for half-price bus and tram travel, with the council covering the remaining cost for those in education, employment, or training.
- 3.18. The Care Leavers Charter has also been updated alongside the Local Offer, ensuring that care leavers have clear expectations about the support they will receive. The Charter emphasises raising aspirations and understanding the needs of care leavers, aligning with the Local Offer and reinforcing the local authority's commitment to being a good corporate parent. The final design of the updated Charter will be completed in partnership with young people, reflecting their input and needs.
- 3.19. The BCT acknowledged the financial implications of the revised offer are minimal, with the primary new commitment being the increased festival and birthday allowances, which will be funded from the existing Leaving Care budgets. There are no major new costs associated with the revisions, and the changes will be managed within the allocated annual inflationary allowances.
- 3.20. The BCT highlighted the challenges faced by care leavers, particularly in relation to mental health and wellbeing services. They identified a notable gap

in support for individuals aged 18-25 and suggested addressing this gap as a priority. The BCT again highlighted the role of Brent Health Matters in tackling these challenges.

- 3.21. The BCT stressed the priority areas for the THRIVE programme and suggested the Looked After Children and Care Leavers Partnership Group develop a comprehensive action plan to address these issues effectively.

Brent Inclusion -Implementation of SEND Strategy 2021-2025

- 3.22. In November 2024, the BCT received an update on the delivery of the SEND Strategy for 2021-2025, with a focus on the progress made up to September 2024.

- 3.23. The strategy's vision aims to help children and young people in Brent "Dream big, achieve well, have choice, control, and lead happy, fulfilled lives." The priorities within the strategy have shaped a comprehensive set of actions that were co-produced with key stakeholders, including young people, parents, carers, and Children's Trust partners. This collaboration is grounded in feedback gathered during a consultation process with over 500 children, young people, and families.

- 3.24. The BCT considered an overview of the ongoing implementation of the SEND Strategy, detailing the actions taken to improve the experience of families with children with SEND in Brent.

- 3.25. A summary of the key updates, as of September 2024 and the priority action points agreed by the Inclusion Strategic Board (ISB) on 14 November 2024 include:

Specialised Education and Skills Development

- Brent has made significant progress in opening more Additional Resourced Provision (ARP). In September 2024, a new ARP with 10 places opened, and two more ARPs are planned for the 2025/2026 academic year. This expansion is part of a broader effort to offer a more inclusive and accessible learning environment for students with additional needs.
- Wembley Manor School, a new special school, is scheduled to open in September 2025. This school will cater to children with specific needs and is currently housed at an interim site. There is also a review of the needs at Woodfield School, with planning in progress to meet those requirements.
- Since September 2023, a monthly panel has been running to address the educational needs of children with complex medical needs, ensuring they can access education despite their challenges. This panel has brought together a multi-agency team to discuss and support these cases.

- The Emotional Based School Avoidance (EBSA) toolkit, designed to help schools manage and support children with EBSA issues, has been rolled out.
- 5 secondary schools and 13 primary schools in Brent are participating in the 'Thrive' SEMH (Social, Emotional, and Mental Health) programme, which helps schools better support students with SEMH needs.
- A new pre-internship programme launched in September 2024 aims to ensure that the right students are enrolled in the Supported Internship programme, helping them develop skills needed for future employment.
- A pathways brochure, detailing routes into education, employment, and training, has been created and is now available on Brent Council's website.
- The development of the Welsh Harp and Skills Resource Centre is ongoing, with the expected launch set for the 2026/27 academic year. The centre will offer various services to young people, including skills development and employment support.

Community Engagement

- The annual 'Branching Out' event took place in October 2024, where families and young people received information on pathways to support from education, health, and social care.

SEND Support

- The SEND Support team attends the IST panel weekly to support schools with early identification of SEND and collaborative interventions. An additional SEND Advisory teacher has been recruited to increase the capacity of the SEND Support team and to enhance the support available to schools.
- Several systems have been put in place to track SEND data, including regular forums for SENCOs (Special Educational Needs Coordinators) and headteachers to ensure that Brent's General Approach Framework (GAF) is responsive to the needs of the schools.
- In 2024-2025, Brent allocated £750,000 from the High Needs Capital Grant to support schools in developing more inclusive environments. This fund helps create physical spaces and systems that accommodate students with SEND, including preschools.
- A working group has been formed to develop an Autism Strategy for the Inclusion Service, set for delivery in September 2025. This strategy will address the needs of children with autism and enhance support across schools and services.

Early Years and Family Support

- A new banding tool has been developed specifically for early years (EY) settings, which helps identify needs before children enter school.
- The third year of funding for Family Hubs continues, with a strong emphasis on communication support and early identification.

- Early help and health visitors are working closely with the Early Years team to develop integrated processes for checking the development and needs of children at the age of 2.
- Training has been provided to staff at Family Wellbeing Centres to better understand SEND and offer targeted support. A helpful booklet has been developed and shared with staff to ensure consistent advice is provided to parents.

Health and Wellbeing Initiatives

- A new children's health inequalities team has been established in Brent to engage with families who typically do not access available services. This team focuses on immunisations, asthma, and mental health.
- The Asthma Friendly Schools programme has been implemented, and as of October 2024, 12 schools have achieved full Asthma Friendly status, with another 8 schools undergoing the audit process. This initiative ensures that schools are well-prepared to support children with asthma.
- The infant feeding team continues to provide essential support to families, offering lactation consulting and addressing complex feeding challenges. A specialist clinic is fully booked, and new staff have been recruited to ensure families receive timely support.

3.26. The BCT recognised the following priority action points that have been identified as significant concerns:

- Updates from the Health Visitor team are needed, particularly regarding how to mitigate the 50% vacancy rate and improve joint working between health, education, and early help teams.
- Health, education, and social care teams are working with the Parent Carers Forum to improve the post-16 SEND offer, with a Post-16 Manager to be hired in early 2025.
- Additional progress is needed on addressing health inequalities for children with complex needs, especially around issues like enuresis and incontinence.

3.27. The BCT provided steer on the implementation plan, emphasising the need for alignment with the needs and aspirations of children and young people in Brent. They raised concerns regarding the growing number of SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) cases, stressing the importance of obtaining more accurate data to better manage these needs. The BCT also agreed to focus on improved data collection and the development of a SEND dashboard to track progress.

3.28. Additionally, the BCT highlighted challenges related to the neurodiversity contract, vacancies in health visitor roles, and gaps in mental health support for care leavers. It was recommended these issues are addressed within

upcoming workstreams, particularly linking in with the Brent Health Matters initiative.

SEND Inspection

- 3.29. In November 2024, the BCT discussed its preparedness for an expected upcoming SEND inspection, drawing insights from a presentation delivered by the Hillingdon Designated Clinical Officer for SEND. The presentation outlined key lessons learned from the recent Hillingdon SEND inspection, with a particular focus on the importance of collaboration between local area partners.
- 3.30. The BCT reflected on several key learning points from Hillingdon's experience, and emphasised the importance of ensuring all documents are up-to-date and staff are supported effectively through the process. These points were considered essential in ensuring Brent is prepared for future inspections with improved coordination.
- 3.31. Following the November meeting, Brent underwent a SEND Inspection in January 2025. The BCT was convened on 4 February 2025, for the purposes of reviewing the partners experiences of the inspection. During this meeting and the March meeting members of the BCT reflected on the inspection process and partners experiences, sharing insights and areas for improvement. Key points of learning included the need for greater involvement in document preparation, improved communication on staff attendance, and ensuring staff were adequately briefed on the inspection process.
- 3.32. The final published inspection report will form the basis for an updated action plan and a new SEND strategy, the implementation of the action plan will be monitored by the BCT.

Brent Carers Strategy – Focus on Young Carers

- 3.33. In November 2024, the BCT received an update that highlighted key developments in the support for young carers in Brent. A further discussion took place during the March BCT meeting with the BCT providing a steer on further progressing this work in 2025.
- 3.34. In Brent, there is a significant population of young carers with are approximately 450 young carers aged between 5-15 and around 1,600 aged 16-24. However, many young carers remain unidentified, either because they are unaware that their caregiving role is termed "caring," or because they do not feel comfortable identifying as a carer due to potential stigma.
- 3.35. As of January 2023, schools were required to identify young carers as part of their census submissions, however, fewer than 70 young carers were identified

in January 2024. Additionally, approximately 50 young carers are identified each year through Child and Family or Early Help Assessments in Brent.

- 3.36. To better support young carers, the Brent Carers Strategy 2023 was developed following consultation with adult and young carers. The strategy is built on the principle that there should be "no wrong doors" for young carers, ensuring that regardless of which service is first accessed, young carers will receive the support they need. The key commitments of the strategy include:
- **Access to Information:** Ensuring that carers can easily access the necessary information.
 - **Partnership Working:** Collaboration between agencies to offer holistic support.
 - **Supporting Wellbeing:** Addressing the mental, physical, and emotional needs of young carers.
 - **Carer Awareness:** Raising awareness of the role of carers in the community and in schools.
 - **Reaching into Communities:** Engaging hard-to-reach communities to ensure all carers are supported.
 - **Supporting Young Carers at the Start of Their Journey:** Ensuring that young carers are identified and supported early.
- 3.37. Each of these priority areas is accompanied by a workstream aimed at achieving specific objectives within the Carers Strategy, and while one workstream focuses specifically on young carers, all workstreams incorporate carers across age ranges.
- 3.38. Brent Carers Centre delivers services for both adult and young carers. The Centre has been instrumental in raising awareness of young carers in the community and providing vital services. They facilitate peer-to-peer support groups, organise young carers' forums to allow young carers to voice their concerns, and offer opportunities for social activities, including trips, events, and networking opportunities during school holidays and term time.
- 3.39. These services are offered in partnership with multi-agency organisations, helping to advocate for the rights of young carers. One of the key goals of these activities is to provide a balance of support and fun for young carers, giving them a much-needed break from their caregiving responsibilities. Currently, young carers' sessions are offered at one Family Wellbeing Centre, with plans to expand to a second centre soon.
- 3.40. The young carers workstream is overseen by Early Help and includes participation from Setting and School Effectiveness, Localities, School Attendance Service, and Public Health. Brent Carers Centre plays a central role in delivering the objectives within the six workstreams, with specific focus on

ensuring that young carers' voices are heard and that services are shaped by their needs.

3.41. Other objectives in the young carers workstream include:

- **Increasing engagement with professionals** to ensure that all agencies (schools, healthcare providers, etc.) are able to identify and refer young carers effectively.
- **Targeted outreach** to improve awareness among schools and healthcare professionals about the needs of young carers.
- **Clear pathways** for information sharing to identify young carers quickly and ensure they receive the support they need.
- **A communications campaign** aimed at raising awareness about the role of young carers among students in schools and in the wider community.

3.42. Feedback from the Young Carers Forum in October 2024 highlighted the need to increase the visibility of young carers across Brent. Young carers also emphasised the importance of having access to enjoyable activities as a respite from their caregiving roles. This feedback informs future service delivery and ensures that young carers' needs and preferences are central to the design of programs.

3.43. The governance structure for the Carers Strategy includes multiple layers of oversight. The young carers workstream reports to the Carers Strategy Implementation Board, which in turn reports to the Carers Board, departmental management teams within Adult Social Care and Children and Young People, the Health Inequalities and Vaccination Executive, and the ICP Executive. This ensures that young carers' needs are prioritised at all levels of decision-making.

3.44. Recent progress in Brent has been promising:

- 114 new referrals to Brent Carers Centre have been made in 2024, indicating that awareness and identification of young carers are improving.
- Communications sent to schools regarding the completion of the young carers element in the census are expected to help increase the identification of young carers in the January 2025 census.
- Young carers' activity sessions are now being held at two Family Wellbeing Centres (Alperton and Three Trees) on a bi-weekly basis, with plans to expand further.
- A pilot program at Preston Manor School has introduced a drop-in session specifically for young carers.

3.45. Whilst it is recognised that progress is being made, the BCT emphasised that further work is needed to enhance the identification and support for young carers across the borough.

- 3.46. The BCT highlighted the importance of working more closely with health partners to raise awareness of young carers, especially utilising GP networks and healthcare providers to improve early identification.
- 3.47. The BCT recognised that self-identification remains a challenge and to address this, there is a need for an awareness and training programme to ensure that all professionals are well-equipped to spot and refer young carers.
- 3.48. In terms of schools, the low identification rate of young carers was identified as an area requiring immediate focus. The BCT recommended using the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) network in schools to improve identification and referral processes. Additionally, the BCT proposed that Brent Carers Centre and the local authority leads should attend the SENCO Forum to ensure that schools are better informed about the needs of young carers and the support available.
- 3.49. Lastly, the impact measures, particularly in relation to mental health, were highlighted as essential to gauge the effectiveness of the services provided to young carers. Understanding the full extent of how caregiving responsibilities affect their wellbeing will be key to refining the support structure in place.
- 3.50. The BCT also called for ongoing discussions regarding the progress of the Young Carers Strategy, ensuring that any existing blockages are addressed, and that all objectives of the strategy are being actively pursued.

Analysing data and intelligence

- 3.51. As part of the BCT strategic vision and priority areas of focus for 2024-2026, the BCT agreed to consider the development of a dashboard with an emphasis on ensuring that the data comprehensively covers health-related areas.
- 3.52. In March 2025, the BCT reached agreement on the approach to review performance data and a commitment was given from partners to regularly share their relevant existing performance data.
- 3.53. The BCT recognised that it has strategic oversight of three priority partnership groups that routinely review performance data and KPIs, including the local authority Inclusion Dashboard. It is proposed that this data be shared with the BCT, with the respective group chairs identifying areas of concern to escalate to the BCT.
- 3.54. The BCT agreed the next steps in creating a process of regularly interrogating a set of data, these include the development of structured schedule for reporting and ensuring the data is aligned with the BCT priority areas of focus.

3.55. The BCT also highlighted the following points:

- The importance of balancing available resources with efficiency was emphasised.
- While the BCT is already receiving KPIs, the focus will shift towards improving the use of these KPIs, particularly in the context of escalation processes and decision-making to drive improvements.
- It was acknowledged that the dissemination of health partner information needs to be more efficient. Addressing this will ensure that the data collected is timely and accessible for all stakeholders.
- There was a strong focus on monitoring the health and outcomes of Looked After Children (LAC) and Care Leavers. Aligning data with these priorities will ensure it directly reflects the BCT's strategic objectives.
- The CAMHS/SEND dashboard model used by another London borough was identified as a useful example, this will be explored further to enhance the functionality of Brent's dashboard.

4.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement

4.1. Brent Council and NWL ICB (Brent) are members of the BCT and the partnership groups and have contributed to this report.

5.0 Financial Considerations

5.1. There are no financial and budgetary implications relating to the Brent Children's Trust progress update report.

6.0 Legal Considerations

6.1. There are no legal implications relating to the Brent Children's Trust progress update report.

7.0 Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

7.1 There are no equality, diversity and inclusion considerations relating to the Brent Children's Trust update report.

8.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

8.1. There are no climate change and environmental considerations relating to the Brent Children's Trust progress update report.

9.0 Communication Considerations

9.1 There are no communications considerations relating to the Brent Children's Trust progress update report.

Report sign off:

Nigel Chapman

Corporate Director of Children and Young People