



## Corporate Parenting Committee

1 February 2023

A Joint Report from London Borough of Brent  
and Barnardo's

### Brent Care Journeys Programme

<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All
<b>Key or Non-Key Decision:</b>	N/A
<b>Open or Part/Fully Exempt:</b> (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
<b>No. of Appendices:</b>	N/A
<b>Background Papers:</b>	N/A
<b>Contact Officer(s):</b> (Name, Title, Contact Details)	<p>Kelli Eboji (Acting)Head of Service, Looked After Children and Permanency Children and Young People Civic Centre, Engineers Way, Wembley, Brent 020 8937 4444</p> <p>Anna Willow Children's Services Manager Barnardo's Anna.willow@barnardos.org.uk 07885 478833</p>

## 1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of activities undertaken by the Brent Care Journeys Programme since the last report (20<sup>th</sup> July 2021). The report also draws attention to key achievements in 2022 and areas for priority in the remaining years of the partnership (2023 – 25).

## **2.0 Recommendations**

- 2.1 The Corporate Parenting Committee is requested to note, review and comment on the content of this report. This is to ensure that the support provided to Brent's Looked After Children and Care Leavers through the strategic alliance with Barnardo's is delivering the desired impact and outcomes as set out in the partnership agreement.
- 2.2 The Committee is also requested to consider what further support could be provided to the partnership by elected members in order to achieve best outcomes for Brent's children and young people.
- 2.3 Additional to this report, quarterly partnership Boards are attended by senior managers from both agencies to provide strategic steer, support and challenge as required.

## **3.0 Background of Brent's Partnership with Barnardo's**

- 3.1. In July 2018, Barnardo's approached Brent CYP for exploration of a collaboration under a project called 'Barnardo's Care Journeys Programme' (BCJ); to create systemic changes which address national inequalities for children in care and leaving care. It was proposed that this partnership of statutory and voluntary sector bodies could enjoy reciprocal learning and development whilst aiming to improve outcomes for children and young people.
- 3.2. In late 2019, the Council agreed to formally enter a collaboration agreement with Barnardo's to further promote participation and the voice of the children and young people particularly focusing on 19–21 year olds. The formal collaboration agreement was signed off in June 2020. The partnership is 100% funded by Barnardo's until 2025 with in-kind support provided by the local authority.
- 3.3. With collaboration from young people, Brent staff and partners, the programme began with an Inception phase (desk-based research) which was usefully followed up and compared by a local picture of discovery analysis. In partnership with young people, a decision was made that the first focus area for co-design and testing would be the experiences of 'late entrants' to care (young people who come into care age 16 and 17).
- 3.4. The outcome of the first phase of co-design with care leavers was the introduction of a Welcome Pack for all late entrants placed in Semi Independent Accommodation. The provision of a consistent, high-quality pack of essential items is now in Brent's Individual Purchasing Agreement with commissioned housing providers.

## **4.0 Care Journeys Programme so far**

- 4.1 BCJ is a youth led programme which sets its sights on changing the system for looked after children to ensure that care experienced young people (CEYP) reach 'positive destinations'. In this context 'positive destinations' are about working beyond statutory definitions and actively listening to young people to identify their own goals. This, for example, could be to do with being a good parent, maintaining good physical and mental health or living independently.

- 4.2. BCJ prioritises (a) the empowerment of our least heard young people and (b) a relational basis for our work together, with a focus on qualitative outcomes. BCJ has engaged over 200 care experienced young people since June 2020. As well as creating important short terms outcomes for this cohort, our aim is to work together to enable the right conditions for change for large numbers of CEYP in the longer term.
- 4.3 BCJ is externally evaluated by the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations. The most recent interim report celebrates the success of BCJ to date:

*“Increasingly it appears that, due to the quality of their work with young people, the local authority and other partners see BCJ as a vehicle for gathering and bringing the voice of care experienced young people into professional and strategic spaces.”*

*“The partnership now offers a full spectrum of possible roles for care-experienced young people, ranging from activity participant, through to paid employee, with opportunities for young people to lead and deliver activities, disseminate project learning and outputs, and become involved in partnership and strategic processes.”<sup>1</sup>*

- 4.4 The report also confirms that the programme is ‘on track’ whilst heeding advice to consider multiple models of systems change:

*“This is in keeping with what the research team would expect to see – isolated, iterative, interventions that address relationships, practice and structures and which, if successful, can be rolled out to other areas. The theory is that a combination of different approaches to improving the system will work together to create a bigger influence on the system overall, working incrementally until a potential tipping point is reached. How well these developments take hold will be followed over the next year.”*

- 4.5. BCJ supports a core group of approximately 35 CEYP who define themselves as a ‘change movement’ and have been creatively engaged in a myriad of ways over the course of the past year. A few members have previously been involved with Brent’s Care in Action and Care Leavers in Action groups but, overwhelmingly, these young people are engaging in this voice and influence work for the first time. BCJ– our investments are relationships, commitment, empowerment, opportunity and capability. BCJ currently employs two Brent care leavers and has made conditional offers to three further ‘experts by experience’. Our belief is that this approach will empower a self-sustaining network of support for CEYP in Brent with potential to achieve legacy long beyond the partnership itself. BCJ upskills and develops the potential of these new colleagues so that they may go on to inspire and develop peer led networks which are engaging and helpful to Brent’s growing population of care experienced young people. Furthermore, in 2023 we have ambition for the way in which staff with lived expertise may be at the forefront of learning and development for professional staff in future.

## 5.0. Co-design Activity in 2022

- 5.1. Between January and September 2022, BCJ facilitated a second co-design phase. As referenced above, the first phase engaged care leavers. The second phase maintained its commitment to empowering the system's least powerful voices by convening social care staff (social workers, family support worker, personal advisors etc) together with young people, as united designers for change. There are some key characteristics to this collaboration, namely that 'expertise' is redefined to elevate lived experience, hierarchy is de-constructed so that power is shared, and learning (as opposed to success) is paramount. BCJ therefore share power with these voices because it is understood that only in partnership are we able to achieve the change that we want to see.
- 5.2. Nine staff (from CYPs and a local SIA provider) were supported by BCJ's Service Manager (Anna Willow) and Senior Service Designer (Rhiannon Creasey) to design with nine care experienced young people. Approximately thirty CEYP were involved in the research and testing stages. Barnardo's Visual Designer (Fabienne Thomas) was engaged in the creation of original visual designs as required.
- 5.3. The cohort self-organised into four smaller groups, developing 'How might we..' statements around the problem areas that their primary research had determined. The statements, final prototype descriptions and recommendations to the Board are displayed below. All recommendations have been accepted.

<b>'How might we...' statement</b>	<b>Description of prototype (which was tested)</b>	<b>Recommendations to the Board (based on data collected from testing)</b>
How might we reduce the rate of staff turn over at Brent Local Authority?	<b>Enhance staff retention (by targeting wellbeing and job satisfaction) by developing a pilot of activities between staff and YP, developing bonds.</b>  Every child in care should have social/relational time with their PA/social worker – every 3 months	Run a 6 week pilot  Attribute across six social work teams (A – F), allocating low, medium and high budgets to teams in pairs.  Communicate with teams  Develop guidance on how staff can claim expenses so they can participate in the chosen activity.  Monitor, evaluate and review.
How might we create a greater feeling of family, care and love for young people in semi-	<b>Provide a clear induction into care with resources which use:</b>	Develop the prototype created as a tool for all Brent's semi-independent

<p>independent accommodation, especially UASC?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Simple, clear language that young people will understand, avoiding or explaining 'jargon'</li> <li>• Infographics to explain the structure of the multi-disciplinary team, their roles and responsibilities</li> <li>• Different language versions for people whose first language is not English</li> <li>• Modern tools that young people relate to – possibly digitally in a format that works on mobile phones or other devices; this also allows for the inclusion of biographies of professionals, short how-to videos, etc.</li> </ul>	<p>providers. Provide in a range of languages.</p> <p>Monitor and review implementation to ensure that SIA residents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better understand multi-agency roles and responsibilities</li> <li>• Understand the purpose of each part of the process they are in, thus engaging them more effectively.</li> </ul> <p>Provide second iteration as a tool for all providers at point of commissioning.</p> <p>Monitor, gather feedback and review.</p>
<p>How might we support young people and the networks around them to form connections which can sustain beyond care?</p>	<p><b>Support every looked after young person to form connections which can sustain beyond care through the provision of a creative memory journals/boxes.</b></p>	<p>Review and agree second iteration of contents of pack to be given to CiC.</p> <p>Ensure quality of products remains high in accordance with feedback during testing.</p> <p><b>NB</b> Consider CYP with additional needs and how some packs may need to be individualised. Explore this in further testing.</p> <p>Create a simple information leaflet which explains the purpose of the box to each CYP. Make this available in different languages.</p>

		<p>Encourage practice which periodically draws upon the memory journals as a discussion point.</p> <p>Test the impact of Memory Journals as a way of CYP having a voice at Looked After reviews.</p> <p>Monitor, gather feedback and review.</p>
How might we better support parents' needs, in order to empower them to support the children's needs, and keep families together?	<b>The introduction of new resources which have been created with young people during pre-birth assessments.</b>	<p>Introduce these resources into the practice of social workers supporting pre-birth and early life, eg CP conference.</p> <p>Consider further targeted support for care leaver parents as a group with particular strengths and challenges (e.g. a specialist mentor, a buddy system, a support group).</p>

- 5.4 Implementation and monitoring of this co-design phase will be managed at quarterly Board meetings, as well as integration into the Voice and Influence sub-group of the Local Partnership meeting. Monitoring will focus on further testing, refining and learning about systemic change.

## 6.0 Youth led communications and campaigns in 2022

- 6.1 The Live Exhibition "*Dear Social Services*" (performed at Kiln Theatre in October) was the work of a newly created young company of care experienced young people. They came together to experiment with a range of expressive art forms, to find meaningful ways to speak to the people around them. Opportunities included poetry (a copy of which all we hope all CPC members have received), film<sup>2</sup>, monologue, movement<sup>3</sup>, sound and visual art. The programme was open to all care experienced young people accommodated in the borough and access was via a couple of introductory taster sessions.

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<sup>2</sup> [https://www.dropbox.com/sh/gblsw7f1naf1sx7/AADklk2z\\_g4qKlQyPDVj1aUza?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/gblsw7f1naf1sx7/AADklk2z_g4qKlQyPDVj1aUza?dl=0)

<sup>3</sup> [\(2\) Post](#) | [Feed](#) | [LinkedIn](#)

The purpose of this event was to think about communities in the borough as strong places of hope and support. Our young people told us that they feel “second rate” and like they are “hiding in plain sight”, so this was their opportunity to begin an important conversation in their borough. They co-designed original pieces of art and directed professional artists to perform their work. Aspects of this performance were repeated at Brent’s CYPS conference in December 2022, so we estimate that, in total, the campaign has reached approximately 400 corporate parents.

- 6.2 In addition to campaign work, BCJ’s young people have taken strides in terms of being able to communicate our purpose, mission and vision through the creation of a short promotional film and by publishing some blogs which express their insights. Both the film and blogs can be found on our website [www.weshinebright.co.uk](http://www.weshinebright.co.uk). We also share regular communications on Instagram (#carejourneyswsbt).

## **7.0 Progress regarding youth led networks and peer to peer support**

- 7.1 At the beginning of 2022, five Brent care leavers were offered bespoke ‘design thinking’ group training and 1:1 coaching with specialist, external agency Deepr ([www.deepr.cc](http://www.deepr.cc)). From this approach to investing in the capability of ‘experts by experience’ we have seen the BCJ Power Groups emerge. Our Power Groups are spaces for CEYP, designed and facilitated by CEYP. Over the course of 2022 we have tested groups which support physical fitness, support beyond the age of 25, enjoyment of reading, mental wellbeing through creativity and parenthood as a care leaver; the last two of which are currently active (‘Therapart’ and ‘Parent Power’).
- 7.2 In 2023 we hope to design and test a further Power Group (‘Brothers’) on the basis that our cohort of unaccompanied boys is growing in number and influence. BCJ now includes a group of young men who are forging networks and connections from a place of isolation, amongst whom we often witness an expression of brotherhood and solidarity.
- 7.3 The BCJ Movement (the young people at the core of our outreach and activity) has resiliently survived challenges presented by the pandemic and associated resource challenges. As we look ahead to 2023, we hope to embed its function and potential by facilitating social, networking and support opportunities twice a month. Additionally, we are working with Eat Club for terms one and two ([We are Eat Club - Improving young Londoners food futures \(eat-club.org\)](http://We are Eat Club - Improving young Londoners food futures (eat-club.org))) to enable independence through education regarding nutrition and cookery.

## **8.0 Evaluation and Impact**

- 8.1 BCJ is externally evaluated by the Tavistock Institute for Human Relations (TIHR).
- 8.2 In 2023, the TIHR will produce ‘learning digests’ to support our focus on learning as opposed to preconceived outcomes. January and February 2023 offer opportunities for 1:1 research interviews for young people and focus groups for professional collaborators.

## 9.0. Future areas for Development and Priorities for 2023

- 9.1 As the project is approaching the final two years of partnership, the priorities are determined by what has been learnt so far in relation to impact and outcomes for Brent's Looked After Children and Care Leavers as well as identifying future learning opportunities.
- 9.2 Although not an exhaustive list of planned operational activity, core projects in the year ahead are summarised as:

Project	Goal
1. The Power Groups	<p>To continue to gather evidence regarding the benefits of youth led service design and delivery, which will inform future direction (focus and investment) for Brent LA and Barnardo's UK in future.</p> <p>Significant employment opportunities for CEYP (as APWs) in whom we invest and support increased capability so that, in turn, they might enable the lives of their peers.</p>
2. The BCJ Movement	<p>An active and successful BCJ Movement offering social connection, networking and capacity building opportunities for a core group of CEYP; a collective of CEYP who grow in momentum to create a change for other CEYP in Brent; a space which challenges loneliness and isolation through the development of youth led pilots and groups for others to attend.</p> <p>A Movement which increases in strength and sustainability to challenge the passive nature of common participatory practice; a forum which meets reliably and develops as a space with CEYP can depend upon; a network which develops informal partnerships with other local organisations to deliver common purpose with consolidated resource.</p>
3. Continuous and Reciprocal Learning	<p>A partnership where deconstructed approaches to power elicit insightful and incisive learning; an approach to learning which is both formal and informal, and where learning creates demonstrable attitudinal shifts to professional structures, culture and practice. A well-</p>



	<p>resourced way of working whereby professional expertise sits alongside lived expertise to produce excellent outcomes.</p> <p>Significant employment opportunities for CEYP (as APWs) in whom we invest and support increased capability, whilst enabling them to design and produce learning for professionals who interact within the system for CEYP.</p>
4. Communication: Messaging and advocacy	<p>Delivery of communications for a range of key audiences which are relevant, effective and accessible; communications which share the mission, vision, ambition and systemic impact of BCJ. Communications which are creative and operate according to models which enable youth voice with dignity and strength.</p> <p>Messaging which, in particular, considers CEYP as a key audience. A team where skilled understanding of advocacy is broad – whereby we are able to advocate at large for CEYP, but also with and for CEYP on an individual basis.</p>
5. The legacy of codesign and coproduction	<p>Oversight, monitoring and accountability for the two codesign phases (21 and 22); integrating into Brent's V&amp;I Partnership structure to ensure that youth led change is delivered and that opportunity for coproduction is instilled.</p>

**Report sign-off:**

*Nigel Chapman*

Corporate Director Children and Young People