

Extraordinary North Belfast LPG Virtual Meeting Minutes
Tuesday 16th June 2020
11 am

Attendees:

Martin Sloane	BHSCT/LPG Coordinator
Katrina Newell	Ashton Centre/Chair
Alison Templeton	Action Mental Health
Martina McIlkenny	PIPS
Gabi Mornhinweg	BHSCT
Edith McManus	Lower North Family Support Hub
Karen McLean	Upper North Family Support Hub
Jenny Potter	NOW Group
Caroline Milligan	Glenbrook Sure Start
Christine McKeown	Ashton Community Trust
Colette Deery	Edmond Rice College
Paul O'Neill	BHSCT
Jennifer Heverin	LPG Administration

Apologies:

Laura Feeney	Save the Children
Karen Burns	BHSCT
Michael Hogg	Education Authority
Sinead Campbell	Advice NI
Annmarie Doyle	Princes Trust
Robyn McNulty	NOW Group
Patricia Moley	People First
Nuala McStravick	Bryson Future Skills
Cara McCann	Here NI
Phil Lindsay	Barnardos Child Bereavement Service
Laura Forte	NIACRO

1) Introduction

Katrina Newell (Chair) welcomed everyone to the meeting. As everyone knows each other, it was suggested that we just proceed into giving updates.

2) Update from Members

i) Alison Templeton – Action Mental Health

They have been open for referrals all throughout lockdown and all services were moved online. This has been very successful with much engagement from service users. August has been set as a provisional goal for resuming a face to face return. New Life Counselling have also merged with Action Mental Health from 1st April 2020. New Life's services can now be accessed through Action Mental Health's website.

ii) Gabi Mornhinweg – BHSCT

A lot of regular meetings have not been taking place due to Covid-19. Some staff have been working a few days per week on the coordination centre set up by the BHSCT. It was found that working within other disciplines was very interesting and afforded them the opportunity to link in with new people. One example is that they were the contact point for the Belfast City Council. When the Council felt a referral wasn't right for the coordination centre, they would phone for advice and be pointed in the right direction.

iii) Jenny Potter – NOW Group

Lots of their services have moved online and engagement levels are up by 35%. They are continuing to receive referrals. What is of note, is an increase around child protection issues and NOW have had to make quite a few onward referrals. They have also experienced pressure to carry out home visits, which they have tried to accommodate outdoors.

The current stage of their food programme, now in Week 11, is due to come to an end on 9th July 2020. It will then move into stage 2 which is around resilience, food education and planning. In preparation for this, they have been sending recipe cards and online videos to their members showing how to prepare healthy meals. This has been well received.

iv) Karen McLean – Upper North Family Support Hub

Referrals initially decreased in April and May but are now increasing again. The majority of referrals have been for family support and although this can only be done over the phone, they have found people have been happy to engage this way. However, they have also found that conversations can take longer over the phone than they would face to face, so although there are less referrals, there is actually more work. The main sources of referrals have been self-referrals and from CAMHS, mostly for mentoring and counselling.

Other prominent issues have been for food hampers and debt advice. Going forward they feel they will see an increase in referrals around anxiety. There is all also the possibility that some attachment issues may arise as children have been constantly at home with their parents.

v) Edith McManus – Lower North Family Support Hub/Ashton

A very similar pattern to Upper North FSH. However, their referrals didn't really reduce in numbers and they were the same type of referrals, only exacerbated by

lockdown. Support has been telephone based, and some families can find this type of interaction difficult. CAMHS are their biggest referrer. They have also found lots of teenage referrals coming through where, although the teenager was reluctant to speak to them, their parent was willing and this enabled the parent to get some tips and strategies to help their child.

Poverty is also a huge issue as a lot of families are really struggling financially and the hubs have been very busy. Overall, the feeling in the Hubs is that despite these challenging times, good work is being carried out.

Going forward there are concerns that in September there will be major issues around children returning to school

vi) Caroline Milligan – Glenbrook Sure Start

Caroline was having technical difficulties so we were unable hear her during the meeting, however, she later emailed this update:

In terms of Glenbrook, we have been doing the following:

- Provision of daycare for keyworkers and vulnerable children
- 1-1 telephone support for families receiving family support
- Contacting all new referrals
- Antenatal WhatsApp group
- Postnatal WhatsApp group
- Breastfeeding support WhatsApp group
- Delivery of art packs to 150 families
- Daily storytime on Facebook
- Play activities on Facebook
- Information on Facebook
- Preparation for DP23YO transition
- Baby massage via Zoom
- Behaviour management via Zoom

Caroline also advised they are currently making plans for July – October.

vii) Martina McIlkenny – PIPS

PIPS moved to new building just before lockdown. Throughout lockdown all staff remained in employment with no one being furloughed as they knew their service needed full staffing levels.

There have been referrals from every age group. Lots of referrals from CAMHS and they have been extremely busy to the point they now have a waiting list, which is something they have never experienced before. There is no capacity for counselling although they are working 7 days per week and evenings also.

The whole team will be returning to the office on Monday (22.06.20). Safety measures have been implemented for this with staff temperatures being taken, stickers on the floor to remind of social distancing and hand gel freely available etc. They are hoping that by August clients can also return to the office as phone counselling can be difficult to engage young people.

viii) Christine McKeown – Ashton/Lower North Family Support Hub

As well as the family support hub, they also run a community family support project and an early intervention family support project. All have been operating throughout. Most of their feedback has been around poverty and emotional support issues. With regards to Kinderkids, 70 staff were furloughed. Out of 77 staff there are only 5 posts funded so Kinderkids is run almost as a social enterprise. They are hoping to reopen on 20th July but this depends on government guidelines. As the guidelines currently stand, they can only bring back around 50% of children.

When Kinderkids closed in March, there was no demand for daycare of keyworker's children so one of their nurseries was given over to Smile Sure Start and this has been running throughout lockdown.

ix) Colette Deery – Edmond Rice College

The school have been using Google Classroom as main form of teaching. In hindsight, no training was carried out for this application so there were a few teething problems at the start, however, 500 children are now successfully using it and feedback has been positive. They are currently future planning for a return to school. A possible date of 17th August 2020 has been put forward, but confirmation is needed from Executive first. In the meantime the school have been making preparations for reopening.

Throughout the lockdown the school have been supporting families with educational needs. One major topic that has been emerging is anxiety, especially among ASD children, as they know they'll be returning to school soon. They are currently supporting three families where the children are terrified of returning to school. In this scenario they may look to gently reintroduce the children on a reduced timetable. A virtual tour of the school being sent to newcomers. There have been lots of Zoom check-in's with parents and staff. Going forward, they feel that a lot of support and therapy will be needed in the aftermath of this pandemic.

x) Martin Sloane – LPG Coordinator/BHSCT

Besides his role of LPG Coordinator, Martin has also been working with the Early Intervention Support Team. An element of his role has been to work with day care providers in setting up day care facilities for the children of keyworkers and for vulnerable children. The list of keyworkers is constantly changing and expanding so more places are needed. However, day care places are currently open on 50% of their normal capacity due to social distancing.

A recurring theme is that of education and the anxiety around children returning to school. It was therefore suggested that it may be worthwhile forming a working group specifically for Childcare and Education.

Martin has also been working on the interface between the FSH, CAMHS and the Gateway Team in terms of appropriate referrals

xi) Katrina Newell – Ashton Centre

Ashton are still delivering their breakthrough programme for 14-24 year olds. There has been a mixed response to this; some groups that started the programme in

January/February have now fell away when moved to remote access; others are fine engaging online; some with anxiety are not comfortable engaging online but if are happy to complete any tasks given. Each person needs be assessed on a case by case basis. They are hoping to resume 1-2-1 mentoring and perhaps some outdoor group work, but at present they are risk assessing and planning.

New Lodge Arts have been carrying out drama groups/dance classes. They also created the 'Boredom Buster' book and distributed 5,000 copies across North Belfast.

Paul O'Neill – Childcare Update

Paul joined the meeting to give a brief overview of the new childcare guidelines. These guidelines are available on the Family Support NI website. The main points outlined were that children in daycare will be in a 'pod' with a maximum number of 12 children per pod and minimum number of 2 staff per pod. These pod numbers will still need to comply with maximum capacity of children per square footage but, age groups can be mixed within a pod. Siblings would be put together in the same pod to aid containment of any infection.

At present we are working to a 2 meter distance rule, but this is an ever changing document. It is necessary to get as many childcare places to open as soon as possible. At present this is 16.

3. Emerging issues

- Anxiety is very much an emerging issue with the reopening of workplaces and schools in the near future. There will significant needs around mentoring/counselling as doing this remotely makes it difficult to properly engage. As a group we need to be prepared for what mental health issues we will be facing and collectively work together so we are aware of each other's programmes and capacity to enable suitable/appropriate referrals to take place.
- Jenny Potter pointed out that domestic violence and relationship breakdowns have increased. Recently three young people have become homeless due to conflicts with their parents. They have also seen an increase in substance misuse. Another issue Jenny has observed is around food poverty. It was pointed out that we may see a different group of people in need as some will be facing redundancies at the end of furlough.
- Christine McKeown asked what role can we collectively play in offering support e.g., making rooms available for children when they are not in school. Martin stated that there have already been discussions around utilising church halls/youth club spaces and this is probably what we will need to do going forward.
- Martin Sloane also reiterated the rise in homelessness in 17-24 year olds. This can be due to relationship breakdowns, which also tie in with mental health issues.
- Paul O'Neill stated that construction and manufacturing have now been added to the keyworker list. Regarding childcare taking place in church halls and the

like, Paul stated to be mindful of any issues that may arise around obtaining insurance for this.

- Katrina Newell asked Martin for a quick update on the other Locality Planning Groups. Martin advised that there was a South and East joint LPG meeting recently and the same themes and issues arose. He also advised that a sub-group is being formed to discuss the topic of education.
- Jenny Potter stated that it was useful to have the LPG forum to raise issues and hear others transition planning. Jenny also advised that she has been in contact with the Children's Commissioner and may be worthwhile involving them to raise some issues.

Action: Jenny Potter to contact the Children's Commissioner.

4. AOB

No other business noted.