

East & South Belfast Virtual LPG
Thursday 27th August 2020
10.30am

Attendees:

Natasha Brennan	Lorag (Chair)
Amy Ashe	EBCDA
Gabi Mornhinweg	BHSCT Community Development
Jonathan Cockroft	EA – Head of School Improvement
Joy Poots	South Belfast Sure Start
Judith Searle	Barnardos
Martin Sloane	BHSCT – LPG Coordinator
Natasha Moore	South Belfast I FSH
Paul O'Neill	BHSCT CSM Family & Childcare
Tracey Wilson	East Belfast Sure Start
Karolina Morgan	CASA FSH
Joan Henderson	Solas
Maggie Andrews	East Belfast Partnership
Jennifer Heverin	LPG Administration

Apologies:

Laura Forte	The Laurence Trust
Gillian Hamilton	NICRO
Carriann Rainey	EBCDA
Jenny Potter	Cedar Foundation
Sinead Campbell	NOW Group
Linda Armitage	Advice NI
Phil Lindsay	EBCDA
J Wallace	Barnardos
Ailish Cullen	Stranmillis
James Scott	Versus Arthritis
Gareth Maguire	Extern
	Sport Changes Lives

1) Welcome and Introductions

Natasha Brennan opened the meeting by extending her thanks to everyone for attending and facilitated a round of introductions. Apologies were read out.

With regards to actions from the last LPG meeting, it was noted that most of the actions were in relation to the topics of education and childcare, which are due to be covered today and therefore any actions will be picked up throughout the course of today's discussion.

Martin Sloane advised the group that the meeting was being recorded for administration purposes. There were no objections to this.

2) Education

Maggie Andrews

The East Belfast Partnership have modified their planned programme over the summer to adjust to a new way of working. Lots of family learning had been planned for March until June so it was decided to continue with this through the creation of family learning packs for Key Stage 1 & 2 children. A combination of established networks, schools and the FSH were used to target distribution. An estimated 600 packs were made, of which 300 went to Key Stage 1 & 2 and the rest went to pre-school children.

A socially distanced, 5 day science summer school also took place in The Skanios Centre. The theme was virology and was attended by 18 children from local schools. The week before this there were outdoor events in Victoria Park and CS Lewis Square. They strived to complete as much as was planned and just tried to adapt. Ashfield Girls had a summer reading programme. Around 100 Year 8 & 9 students signed up for it.

A few nursery school teachers were trained online in the Solihull Approach and it is hoped this will be extended to Key Stage 1 & 2. Some post-primary are also expressing interest in this. During lockdown, surveys were carried out with local schools asking them what they think the main issues will be. Aside from lost learning, there will be a whole host of social and emotional issues that are causing concern. Natasha Brennan thanked Maggie and also expressed her interest in the Solihull Approach and how this could potentially be extended to South Belfast.

ACTION: Natasha Brennan to follow up with Maggie Andrews regarding the Solihull Approach.

Natasha Brennan – Families Current Needs Slideshow

See slideshow attached.

Jonathan Cockroft – EANI

Johnathan introduced himself as Head of Service of Locality. He explained that there is a dedicated officer, Brian Maguire, for North Belfast schools and that some of these topics might link in with him.

We are now in a period of restart and the EA has a slightly different approach in that they have both statutory and voluntary settings. However, if they are PEG funded places, then early years will support all of them.

Jonathan's own sector – the School Development Service - generally just works with statutory settings, ie, nursery units and nursery schools. However, at the moment they are all working together. Continuity of learning groups have been set up for special schools, primary, post primary and nursery. Within that group it has people from ETI, CCMS, EA, Irish Medium – all settings are being treated as the same.

Pre-school guidance has been issued regarding the shaping of their restart. It has been sent to over 740 settings, including SureStart. There is a preschool education professional learning portal. It is accessed by invite only, but Jonathan has advised preschool leaders and early year's specialists to register as a way to access and share information, and it was also encouraged that as many as possible LPG members join. The current discussions on this portal are around how everyone is restarting, and sharing in this would be useful. Johnathan will share the link. The EA website also has a separate section regarding supporting learning – this is more aimed at parents. Jonathan can also send link for this also. At present the EA has link officers to provide support for statutory settings and 1100+ setting benefit from this. This provides individual support for school leaders.

The change in legislation regarding legal right to education to best endeavours had a big impact on children with disabilities. These children were pushed out during lockdown and this should not happen again if there are further lockdowns. Joan Henderson stated that the conditions for these children over the last few months were unacceptable. Their support systems all taken away and families were just left to deal with it. It is hoped that going forward a more balanced approach is taken as a lot of families were left in a very bad situation, almost reaching breaking point. Resources need to be in place and as complicated and challenging as it is, the community to step in and try to support that. Communities want to help. We cannot leave vulnerable people in that situation again. Children's respite homes are all closed and some families are left in a very precarious situation. If a similar situation arises we need support in place.

Q) Some children need to be assessed to get in to nursery or primary school – this was stalled but is this moving again? What is happening to these children in transition? - Joy Poots

A) Some children have secured a place in a special school, some have not and will be attending mainstream nursery around October/November. Others don't have and nursery place and the impact of this will be felt with they start Primary 1 as they may have regressed in behaviours in this time.

Jonathan Cockroft added that a significant number of schools opened to provide childcare to key workers and vulnerable children. Over the summer a substantial amount of work was carried out by the EA to find provision for children who have already been assessed. This is still ongoing. Clare McKenna is the head of statutory operation and is a good point of contact. Natasha Brennan suggested that it would be beneficial to organise a meeting with Claire McKenna from EA.

ACTION: Martin to organise meeting with Claire McKenna

ACTION: Jonathan to share EA web links

3) Childcare

Paul O'Neill (BHSCT)

Paul's topic on childcare was brought forward on the agenda as Paul needed to leave the meeting early.

The group were advised that all finance is being handled by Early Years Organisation – the BHSCT Early Years has no involvement in monetary matters. Daycare inspections are restarting in October. Self-evaluations will be issued in September and will include a Covid-19 assessment. This time there will be more emphasis placed on self-evaluation as BHSCT wants to be satisfied that the provider has a full understanding of Covid-19 and its implications. Documentation will also be kept to a minimum and contained in plastic covers, such as poly pockets. Inspections will be very different this year and their purpose is to provide support to providers and reassurance to parents.

Q) If someone tests positive, there are lots of different scenarios that can arise. Who do we, as childcare providers, ask for direction? Can childcare have a single point of contact to discuss issues as they arise? – Joy Poots

A) Refer to Family Support NI and PHA for the latest guidance.

A short discussion took place around childcare providers feeling that the current guidelines can be quite ambiguous for the variety of situations which a provider may face. Track and Trace can take up to 72hrs to respond and this can leave an organisation in a grey area with what they should do whilst waiting on the results. It was felt a single point of contact would be beneficial.

Jonathan Cockroft pointed out that, for schools in a similar situation, the EA has set up a hotline. He also suggested that whilst waiting on the Track and Trace result, it would be a good idea to ask questions such as: Where has the person been? Who have they been in contact with? Have they practiced social distancing? Have they worn a mask? Etc. By gathering as much detail as possible it will be easier to get precise guidance from the PHA.

It was highlighted that organisations will all be doing something different and for a more cohesive approach it would be helpful if the PHA could give some further guidance on any grey area and that it would be beneficial to see if we could have someone from the PHA at the next meeting.

ACTION: Martin to extend an invite to the next meeting to the PHA.

4) Family Support Hubs

FSH Area:	Inner East Belfast
Timeframe:	11 June – 1 st Sept
Number of Service Requests Received in timeframe:	63
Number of Service Requests Received to date:	1508
Source of Service Requests:	Health visitors, GPs, self referrals, CAMHS, school
Key Gaps identified:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -ASD support for families -Childcare -Play therapy 	
Key Successes identified:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Belfast City Council and Bytes laptop scheme -Uniform voucher and uniform recycling scheme with Scaffolding project 	
AOB for Sharing:	

FSH Area:	Outer South & East Belfast FSH
Timeframe:	11 th June– 27 th August
Number of Service Requests Received in timeframe:	68
Number of Service Requests Received to date:	1168
Source of Service Requests:	Health Visitors, Gateway, Schools, EWO, Camhs, Self, Community organisations
<p>Key Gaps identified: Play Therapy</p> <p>Emerging needs appear to be:</p> <p>Family Support & Parent programmes Behaviour Management Support – a number of the children either have a diagnosis of ASD / ADHD or are waiting for a diagnosis</p> <p>Practical support (uniform and school costs and computer devices) – the late payment of the uniform grant had a huge impact on the number of families coming through to date some families have still not received a grant or any communication to let them know if / when they may receive this. As some schools have already started back this has been a huge pressure on families who have already been financially impacted by Covid-19 & lockdown</p> <p>Parental well-being – requests for counselling</p> <p>Social Isolation which is impacting on parents and children's mental health</p> <p>Throughout lockdown and now as schools are returning we have had a number of families report concerns about the transition back to school, some of our families have children attending different schools and the lack of information and guidance given has been a concern for them. Another concern is the worry of children being sent home to isolate. Families are worried that this is going to have a bigger impact on education, childcare and also the parents employment.</p>	
<p>Key Successes identified:</p> <p>OSE Hub has continued to link closely with our Hub members throughout Lockdown to ensure that support is available for families who need it.</p> <p>BCC/Bytes project allowed us to allocate an additional 19 devices to young people who either had no or limited access to a computer device in order to access education</p>	

AOB for Sharing:	
FSH Area:	South Belfast I
Timeframe:	June and July 2020
Number of Service Requests Received in timeframe:	June 17 July 12
Number of Service Requests Received to date:	58
Source of Service Requests:	Top referrers: Community, school, Self
Key Gaps identified:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Home visiting in person (not remote) - Children's play therapy/ counselling waiting times 	
Key Successes identified:	
BHC and BCC/Bytes tablets	
AOB for Sharing:	

FSH Area:	CASA - South Belfast II
Timeframe:	01.06.20 – 26.08.20
Number of Service Requests Received in timeframe:	36
Number of Service Requests Received to date:	58
Source of Service Requests:	MLA-1, CAMHS-5, Education Welfare-1, School-11, Community-5, Gateway-2, Self-5, Health Visitor-2, Voluntary-2, Senior Mental Health Team-1, GP-1
Key Gaps identified:	N/A
Key Successes identified:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3rd June- Made contact with Bytes to receive technology for home schooling. • 7th July- Made contact with Education and Development worker to organise two sessions to be delivered with children who received Dream a Little Dream book. Session delivered by Author and Play Therapist for reconnecting programme worries and fears for returning to school. • 8th August- Made link with South City for uniform exchange.
AOB for Sharing:	<p>WWC – Free Confidential Professional Counselling over the phone.</p> <p>WWC – Free online classes via zoom</p>

5) Next Steps

Uniforms – Martin Sloane

There are a number of citywide initiatives for recycling school uniforms, some being:

- Conway Mill food bank are participating in citywide uniform distribution
- Donegall Pass Community Forum
- Scaffolding Project

Maggie Andrews advised that the Scaffolding Project spoke to schools in June and collected uniforms. They then set up an online shop where 100 families picked up uniforms. The person could look online, select what they need, put it in their basket then arrange pick up. It was found this system worked better than the previous distribution system and it hoped to keep this shop open all year round. Maggie will speak to Barbara Smith about how to set up the online shop so she can share with the group.

CYPSP Survey – Martin Sloane

Una Casey created a survey for all LPG members. The deadline for completion was originally August, but it has now been postponed until September. Martin has agreed to resend the survey and has asked everyone to complete.

ACTION: Martin to resend CYPSP Survey

Scoping Exercise – Martin Sloane

A LPG scoping exercise is taking place to assess what resources and staff are available to assist with education if schools are reduced to part-time.

ACTION: Martin to resend Scoping Exercise

Action Points – Natasha Brennan

- Survey with school principals (Natasha Brennan - as per presentation)
- Supporting families with childcare (Natasha Brennan - as per presentation)
- Extend invite to PHA at next meeting (Martin Sloane)
- Follow up on WITH Maggie Andrews on the Solihull Approach (Natasha Brennan)
- Organise a meeting with Clare McKenna from EA (Martin Sloane)
- Share EA SEN links (Jonathan Cockroft)
- Resend CYPSP Survey (Martin Sloane)
- Resend Scoping Exercise (Martin Sloane)

We also need to consider:

- How can we support organisations? Clear guidance and support need for those making decisions in this difficult time.
- Children with additional needs – how can we support families if there is a further lockdown?

Thanks was extended for everyone's attendance and the meeting was concluded.