

**West Belfast Virtual LPG**

**20<sup>th</sup> August 2020**

**10.30am**

**Attendees:**

Deirdre Walsh	Whiterock Children's Centre (Chair)
Nicola Verner	Spectrum Centre
Heather Floyd	MUMO at Forthspring
Angela Mervyn	West Belfast Partnership
Paul O'Neill	BHSCT
Penny Ambrose	Beechmount Sure Start/Blackie River
Joanne Menabney	Greater Shankill FSH
Nicola Masterson	Outer West FSH
Ihintz O'Iden	Whiterock Children's Centre
Martin Sloane	BHSCT/LPG Coordinator
Jennifer Heverin	LPG Administration

**Apologies:**

Bernie Toner	Holy Trinity Centre
Pauline Kersten	Conway Education Centre
Rachel Power	APEX Housing
Kyle Duncan	Autism NI
Jan Wright	Family Fund
Phil Lindsay	Barnardos
Yvonne Cowan	BHSCT
Jenny Potter	NOW Group
Joan Totten	North Belfast Alternatives
Ronan Heenan	People First
Sarah Jones	Belfast Met
Dympna Johnson	Greater Shankill Partnership/Spectrum Centre
Michael Hogg	EANI
Gareth Maguire	Sport Changes Lives
Sinead Campbell	Advice NI
Danielle Roberts	Here NI
Marie-Therese Cassin	Cedar Foundation
Natalie Killough	BHSCT
Mairead Gilmartin	Outerwest SureStart

## 1) Welcome and Introductions

Deirdre Walsh welcomed everyone to the meeting. Deirdre then introduced the newest member, Angie Mervyn, West Belfast Partnership Board.

## 2) Members Updates

<b>FSH Area:</b>	Greater Shankill Family Support Hub	
<b>Timeframe:</b>	Quarter 1	Quarter 2 (July – Aug)
<b>Number of Service Requests Received in timeframe:</b>	25	17
<b>Number of Service Requests Received to date:</b>	1037	1054
<b>Source of Service Requests:</b>	Self Health Visitor Allied Health Professional CAMHS EA GP	
<b>Key Gaps identified:</b>	None identified	
<b>Key Successes identified:</b>	<p>Families referred to suitable services – mainly telephone support given situation with Covid-19</p> <p>Reasons for referral included; mentoring, family support, financial support &amp; employability support.</p>	
<b>AOB for Sharing:</b>		

<b>FSH Area:</b>	Upperspringfield/whiterock Family support
------------------	---

	hub
<b>Timeframe:</b>	July-august 2020
<b>Number of Service Requests Received in timeframe:</b>	14 -July 17- august Total 31
<b>Number of Service Requests Received to date:</b>	112 (April-August)
<b>Source of Service Requests:</b>	Social worker, gateway team, community, camhs, education welfare, self, speech and language therapist gp's
<b>Key Gaps identified:</b>	
<p>Services with face to face contact have been very limited at moment due to covid restrictions, many working from home etc- some having noted young people are struggling to engage on phone etc - for counselling, mentoring etc</p> <p>Asd Programmes/activities for families(however this has started taking referrals again-blackie centre etc at end of this month)</p>	
<b>Key Successes identified:</b>	
<p>Gaps identified with regards to tablet/IT support- this then resulted in tablets being given to hubs to loan out to those families in need for use in google classroom etc - through BYTES scheme</p> <p>Also through discussion with hubs etc it was recognized the need the pressures families were under as a result of covid 19 - financially etc with a small amount of money being allocated for covid 19 support for food support, practical help, transport costs, child centred activities to families referred through the hub.</p> <p>Services in locality being creative with online zoom classes and activities, resource packs for children and families etc during this period</p> <p>Good networking and liaising with services in locality -schools, community etc - in delivery of food parcels etc</p>	
<b>AOB for Sharing:</b>	

### 3) Childcare and Education

***Paul O'Neill – Childcare***

The Family Support NI website has the latest guidance as it is published. The bi-weekly meetings, with all the Trusts, collate the suggestions on how to manage the latest issues. However, the Department makes the final call on any decisions.

In childcare, the pods are still in place. An issue that has arisen is the difference between the guidance issued by Track and Trace and the guidance around a symptomatic child in daycare. With regards to daycare, the guidance states that a child with symptoms is sent home immediately. However, if by the following day the symptoms are gone, the child can then return to their placement. Children can have frequent temperature spikes for a variety of reasons (eg. teething) which then quickly abate. However, if by the following day the child is still showing symptoms, they would need to remain away from the daycare and get tested.

This guidance applies to daycare only, not schools.

The Department of Education advice differs from the Department of Health advice. In a facility providing early year's childcare then the Department of Health advice will override that from the Department of Education.

Inspections were planned for October but these have been stood down. When they are started again they will look very different; paperwork will need to be in plastic coverings, many meetings will be virtual and there will not be visits into bubbles.

***Angela Mervyn – Education***

Angie introduced herself as the Education Programme Manager in the West Belfast Partnership Board. Since lockdown there have been lots of work done with schools and afterschools. Across West Belfast there is a networking community of 25 nursery schools, 19 primary schools and 7 post-primary schools. This area does not include the Shankill but they are in regular contact regarding education programmes.

Schools originally prepped for the 2m social distance rule, this was then reduced to 1m and now the current guidelines state schools will be opening for all children.

Some nursery schools are open this week for staggered intake. Over the next two weeks many are adhering to the original plans where half of the children are in two days, school is then closed and cleaned for a day and the remainder

of the children and are in the other two days. After these initial two weeks, intake will be increased and children will then enter their classroom social bubbles.

Some primary schools have reopened this week to allow children pick up resources and see the school. There will be defined entrances and exits and parents are not allowed on the school grounds.

In terms of nursery school children with separation issues, schools are looking to have some sort of isolation spaces where a parent can stay with their child for a while until they are settled.

Social bubbles are based on classes rather than year groups. We are still learning and are aware that there are still lessons to be learned and problems to overcome.

There also has been very limited guidance regarding vulnerable and SEN children.

If a child tests positive, it is thought the ripple effect from this can impact 15 adults and 150 other children. Schools are therefore saying that if a child displays a temperature or symptoms whilst at school, they will be immediately sent home and sent for testing. This differs from the guidance for daycare as stated by Paul above.

All schools agreed that all children would receive the same amount of hours in school, regardless of how these hours would be distributed.

They are working with schools in case of a second spike and looking at what non-digital programmes that can be carried out in the home. However, there are some iPads that will be made available that have been pre-loaded with literacy and numeracy apps. Schools to identify which children need these devices.

Schools will not be hosting breakfast clubs or afterschool clubs on school premises. At present they are stringently limiting on who can be on school premises.

Further issues have been found around keeping children in a certain bubble. If a child is contained in one bubble in school and then attends an afterschool group, they will be in a different bubble. There may need to be a conversation with afterschools clubs about how to best handle this.

Questions:

***Q) Paul: If guidelines change and children attend school part-time and therefore will need to access daycare – who will pay for this daycare?***

A) Angie: At the moment a full return to school is planned. However, if children do have to attend part-time, a suggestion was made to create 'learning pods' which would consist of small groups of the most vulnerable children who need help with learning. Non-digital packs could be given out and community staff and volunteers could be utilised to help children with their school work. If there is an outbreak in a class, the children will be sent home pending testing. However, it is unclear if this applies to just the one child or the whole class. In this scenario, the child would be at home self-isolating and not at daycare. There needs to be some provision made for such a situation as parents may not be able to take time off work to mind the child. Also, if children go to school part-time then funding needs to be made available for the days they are not in school and require childcare. Lots of parents opted out of home schooling altogether and now the worry is those children will fall way behind. The issue is therefore not just about childcare for working parents but also for support for vulnerable children of non-working parents.

The West Belfast Partnership will be mapping attendance in the first month of school. Most people are happy to send their children back to school, but others are fearful and anxious about this. Literacy and numeracy support would be needed for these children and a good connection to the school is needed to they can remain in touch.

***Q) Is there an opportunity for student teachers placements to be put in community settings like this?***

A) Yes there is a very real possibility student teachers could be utilised as part of their placements. Costings would need to be looked at before decisions can be made.

Paul interjected to clarify a point regarding any childcare taking place within a school. He stated that if someone was there to provide care, then that particular room needs to be registered with the Trust. If the person/people are there in as an afterschools club, eg, football club/homework club etc., then registration is not required.

The issue of transport and crèche pick-ups after school was also raised. The children's class bubbles cannot be maintained outside of the school, such as on school buses.

Afterschool providers will be having conversations with schools regarding bubbles and how to best maintain these. However, it would be extremely difficult to maintain bubbles in an afterschool setting as children would need to be kept in their own school/own year/own class and this is not feasible or practical.

It was agreed that EA can be difficult to reach, Angie Mervyn stated that she has contact with the DE and if anyone has any queries to email her and she will forward onwards.

#### **4) A.O.B**

If there is a second lockdown, and furlough isn't granted, then this is a real concern as to how childcare staff can be paid and facilities kept open.

It was reiterated to refer to the Family Support NI website for latest information, but for any other queries, email Martin and he will strive to answer.

Thanks was extended to Angie Mervyn and Paul O'Neill for their participation.