



**Antrim/Ballymena Children's & Young People's Strategic Partnership Locality Planning Group minutes**

**Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> May, 2025 at 2.00 p.m.**

**Venue: All About Us – ASD Teens  
Unit 4 Greystone Shopping Centre, Antrim, BT41 1JW**

**Attending:-**

<b>Margaret Purdie</b>	Health and Wellbeing Officer (Antrim/Ballymena), NHSCT
<b>Linda Wylie</b>	Health and Wellbeing Programme Support Officer, NHSCT
<b>Mervyn Rea</b>	Chair
<b>Kavita Brownlie</b>	Connect North
<b>Daniel McCurdy</b>	Libraries NI
<b>Jacqueline Bingham</b>	Libraries NI
<b>Grainne Rooney</b>	HSCNI Emotional Health & Wellbeing Practitioner
<b>Karen Cuddy</b>	Step up Programme NRC
<b>Anna Volz</b>	Antrim & Ballymena Family Support Hub
<b>Gerry McVeigh</b>	Co-Chair/Start 360
<b>Paula McLaughlin</b>	NICMA
<b>Lisa Logan</b>	NICMA
<b>Karen Brownlow</b>	Ballymena South Community Cluster
<b>Catriona Lennox</b>	Springboard
<b>Bronte Mayo</b>	Patient Client Council
<b>Pat Ruddy</b>	All About Us
<b>Shannon</b>	All About Us
<b>Christina O'Neill</b>	All About Us
<b>Maurice Nixon</b>	King's Trust
<b>Lisa Edgar</b>	Bytes Programme
<b>Grainne Rooney</b>	Emotional Wellbeing in Schools

**1. Introduction & Apologies**

Mervyn extended a warm welcome to everyone and thanks to Christina for providing the venue.

## **Apologies:-**

Heidi Johnston – Youth Justice Services  
Veronica McKinley – NICHI Health Alliance  
Aine Wallace – Fresh Minds  
Denise McVeigh – MEA Council  
Siobhain Murphy - A Safe Space to be Me  
Will McDowell – Antrim and Newtownabbey Council  
Pamela McClelland – Impact Network NI  
Sharon Caldwell - Home-Start Antrim District  
Lexi Scott – Ballymena Learning Together

## **2. Minutes of Last Meeting**

Agreed as accurate.

## **3. Matters Arising**

None

## **4. Speaker Kavita Brownlie – MEA Connect North Link Worker**

Kavita brought us a presentation on the role of Connect North which is a support service for those aged 18 years and above. Parents and Caregivers can access help for younger family members.

Kavita explained that there is a wealth of information contained within the Directory of Services now known as “Unified Directory of Services”. Once the Directory is accessed the user selects a category and adds their postcode to obtain information about appropriate services and events.

There are four Link Workers who are based within the Causeway Coast & Glens, Antrim & Newtownabbey, Mid & East Antrim and Mid Ulster Council areas. A team of Link Workers are also based within the Northern Trust who receive referrals from the Memory Service

If help cannot be found via the Directory, a Link Worker will call to visit the person at home, ask about their main concerns and discuss how they can be assisted.

The Link Worker will then carry out a Support Plan for each person and will thereafter create referrals to the appropriate services. Examples of Referrals made include OT, Sensory Teams, Fire Service, local Councils for wellbeing and home safety checks etc.

Each request is triaged and normally within two weeks the person who requested help is contacted.

Finally, Kavita asked members to contact herself to ensure that up and coming events, new services and updated information be added/amended in the Directory.

## **5. Family Support Hub update**

### **Anna Volz - Family Support Hub**

My name is Anna Girvan (Volz) and I have recently taken over the role of Family Support Practitioner for the Antrim/Ballymena Family Support Hub. Unfortunately for the Hub, I have been offered a permanent psychology post with the Southern Trust and will be leaving my Hub post at the end of this month.

Claire Larkin is still off on long-term sick so Pamela Sweeney is continuing to cover management of all the Hubs alongside her own service. Claire Kelly is now on maternity leave and had a beautiful baby boy on 24th April. Mom and baby Alex are both doing well.

Despite staffing pressures and particularly high numbers of referrals coming through to all the Hubs, we are still managing to process all referrals and complete all core hub tasks.

We are continuing to feedback unmet need to the Hub Steering group and on our monthly monitoring forms. We are also now recording as unmet need those occasions when a service is available but is unable to take referrals due to capacity/waiting lists. These would be the areas of unmet need for '24/'25:

- Counselling for Children/ Young People
- Emotional and behavioural difficulty support for pre-school children
- Emotional and behavioural difficulty support for parents
- Parenting programmes/parenting support
- Counselling services for parent/s
- Drug/alcohol related harm/abuse by adults (including parents)
- Emotional and behavioural difficulty support for post primary school children
- Emotional and behavioural difficulty support for primary school children

The Hub team, alongside all Action for Children staff, have just completed Solihull Foundation training.

## **6. Members Updates**

### **Jacqueline Bingham – Libraries NI**

Elmer the Elephants Celebrations for Elmer's 35<sup>th</sup> birthday are happening in the Libraries of Antrim and Newtownabbey.

We are also launching our Community Garden Project with Antrim Community Fridge at Antrim Library on Wednesday 21 May at 11:00am.

June will mark:

- Empathy Day- with story sessions, activity stations and empathy workshops looking at books and stories that help us recognise emotions, kindness and empathy.
- Refugee Week- we will be looking at different cultures with various activities for families.
- Hi Vis Fortnight- will be taking place 01-14 June and will be featuring our braille, touch and feel, and large print books, along with some of the Living Paintings resources which is an organisation we are working with.

Summer is nearly here and that means Big Summer Read Challenge. We are launching at the end of June, and this will run all the way through to the end of August.

There are “passports” detailing some prompts to keep reading exciting and a game page for those who like something more visual and interactive.

There will be activities and free fun throughout the libraries that families, groups, or summer schemes are welcome to come along to. For groups, just give the library a heads up so they know for resources and crafts, etc.

### **Grainne Rooney – Emotional Wellbeing Teams in Schools**

A quick update on the upcoming schools that EWTS will be involved in for the academic year 2025-26 – Parkhall Integrated (Antrim), Rathmore EOTAS (Antrim) & Loughan EOTAS (Ballymena). Parents, teachers and pupils can all avail of our services.

Details for Take 5 Accreditation Celebration event. If a school has been accredited as a Level Three Take 5 School, they will have received an invite to Galgorm on 11<sup>th</sup> June. This is one of the perks of accreditation – which EWTS can help achieve.

### **Claire Reid – Community Advice Antrim & Newtownabbey**

We dealt with over 39,000 enquiries in the previous year generating over £8 million for clients of Antrim and Newtownabbey through unclaimed benefits and entitlements. Caan supported at 223 benefit appeals and completed 1600 disability forms.

Last year we assisted approx 320 households with the Social Supermarket Scheme with benefit checks, budgeting advice and food vouchers.

119 families were also referred through the Save the Children fund allowing them access to educational and toy packs, vouchers for household items and food/clothing.

This work continues and we welcome referrals from any of your organisations.

### **Karen Cuddy – Step Up Programme in NRC**

Karen works within NRC with the Step Up programme. This programme is for disadvantaged young people aged 16-19 years. The course enables participants to complete a level 1 course for three essential skills. Karen indicated that she is waiting for Letter of Offer for next year and the Connect programme will recommence. This September the programme will be aimed at level 1-2 and there are loads of places available.

### **Daniel McCurdy – Libraries NI**

Daniel said Libraries are working with King's Trust as Students are calling into the Library during May and June during exam season. Working with YGAG Education Trust. Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> June, 2025 is Empathy Day.

Portglenone Library – Sensory Storytelling Sessions.

Have delivered a talk to Ballymena Autism NI feedback group and hope to re-start a group for young children and adults. Please contact Daniel to find out more details.

### **Gerry McVeigh – Start 360**

- Autism Social Space – starting 18th June for 18-25 year olds, Wednesdays 6pm-8pm at Start360 in Ballymena. An opportunity for autistic young people to connect and socialise. Parents/caregivers are welcome and will have a space to connect with tea/coffee.
- Hooked on Health– fishing sessions available to support young people to access the therapeutic benefits of nature and the outdoors. Available for individuals aged 11-17- or 18–25-year-olds on a weekly basis (there will be a max of 3 young people). All equipment and transport supplied. Also available to larger groups though will have to supply their own transport.
- Re-Equip program – using exercise/sport with therapeutic talk therapies to enable a 'whole person' approach to recovery. The program will engage ten clients (up to age of 25) in a support package that includes 1 to 1 mentorship within a local gym and a two month gym membership alongside therapeutic keywork to include motivational interviewing, harm reduction and educational work. The program is aimed at those difficult to reach clients who may be resistant to traditional approaches with the goal that achievements in the gym and enhancements in self-

esteem and motivation therein can be transferred into lifestyle choices in regard to substance use and high-risk behaviour

- Girls Group – running every Thursday 3.30-4.30pm for girls aged 11-16 at Start360 in Ballymena. Supporting connection, learning and positive emotional health & wellbeing
- Young Men's Football – Thursday evenings 8-9pm at Ballymena Showgrounds open to young men aged 16+. An opportunity to improve physical and emotional wellbeing and connect with new people.
- Drop In – social and recreational open access Drop In for 11–17-year-olds Tuesday & Thursday 3pm-5pm at Start360 in Ballymena.
- Alcohol Awareness Week – 19th -25th June. Start360 will be running wellbeing sessions in libraries throughout Mid & East Antrim
- As always any concerns/questions about alcohol or drugs (inc. counselling/therapeutic support for young people and families, training/awareness sessions) feel free to get in touch with Start360 – 028 2568 9356 or [Gerry.McVeigh@Start360.org](mailto:Gerry.McVeigh@Start360.org)

### **Lisa Logan - Bytes Programme**

Working in Dunclug area. Drop in's from 3.00 p.m. to 5.00 p.m. (Dunclug Shops) also Wednesday evenings. Kells Youth Club on Wednesday and Friday evenings.

### **Bronte Mayo - Client & Patient Council**

The Parent Client Council provides individuals and groups with information and advice regarding queries with Health Care. Advice and signposting is offered re: health inequalities to people who are often afraid to raise concerns. Bronte also explained that Children are able to attend alongside Mum's and Dad's or directly and they can signpost on.

### **Catriona Lennox – Springboard**

Catriona indicated that Springboard can now offer digital courses for those who cannot attend face to face training.

### **Pat Ruddy – All About Us**

Pat mentioned that they hope to organise Birthday Parties in future.

Adopt a Granny programme – All ladies loved their gifts and some very positive feedback.

They organised two trips over Easter which were intergenerational from ages 1 to 70 plus.

A formal will take place on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. Shannon is involved in making the craft items and ladies have prepared table decorations.

If any member is able to come along to All About Us to provide a talk on a Monday please contact Pat directly.

### **Christina O'Neill – All About Us – Asd Teens**

New Programme for those 18+

Our new programme is called Crafting Connections and is open to anyone aged 18+, the programme is funded by the executive office with a good relations theme at the core of it and is based on creating mutual understanding and strengthening the community.

The programme runs at All About Us on Wednesdays from 10am-12pm.

Over the course of the programme there are arts and crafts activities, food tasters from around the world, a visit from the small world café, a visit to Crumlin Road goal (tbc) and a weekend to Derry/Londonderry to explore shared history and finishes with working alongside a local artist creating a mural.

Asdan programmes – we are running Asdan certified programmes, these are available for those aged 10-24 and are based on many different topics, there are short courses as well as a longer course – level 1-3 Personal Development and Independent Living, these courses can be tailored to the needs and interests of the individual. A recent example of topics have included budgeting, fundraising, football, escape room visit, preparing food, making a home, building relationships etc.

Our men's group runs on Fridays from 9.30am-11.30am and at present their activities are based on playing pool and darts (activities are participant led)

Various weekly support and social sessions run for young people:

SenseAble starts age 0-4

Ages 8-13

Ages 13-18

Ages 17-24

Community group

DND under 18 and over 18

We have a summer fun day/community engagement and information day planned for 25<sup>th</sup> July from 11am – 3pm, anyone who would like an information table for the day can contact us, the idea is to raise awareness and share what support etc to the community on the services that are out there.

For further information on any of the above contact [admin@allaboutus.club](mailto:admin@allaboutus.club)

### **Karen Brownlow – Ballymena South Cluster**

Karen explained that a link had been established with Castle Tower School Leavers Class. The children came out to the allotments once per week. This will finish at the end of the School year.

A shared pot of money is available for a Summer Scheme. This will be facilitated by the Music Rooms in Ballymena and will take place for one week in July and August for 50 children (4 – 12 years old).

### **Maurice Nixon – The King's Trust**

Maurice requested members to forward him their e-mail addresses for updates. They have secured prosperity fund for another year.

Employability programmes are now on-line.

### **Paula McLaughlin and Lisa Logan – NIMCA**

The ladies indicated that they are currently waiting on confirmation of funding for another year.

## **7. RAISE update**

Margaret told us about a further meeting which was held today. Group still working on List of emerging priorities. Strategic Plan will be submitted on 20<sup>th</sup> of June. Margaret will keep everyone updated and she imagines funding will be offered fairly soon thereafter, next meeting planned for 17<sup>th</sup> June.

## **8. Action Plan update 2025-2028**

Kate had circulated CYPSP Plan for 2025-2028. This plan will be used to create our own Action Plan. The areas we focused and talked about in November were School Disruption and Poverty & Cost of Living.

Margaret asked members to specify problems at a local level together with a solution which can be offered through our organisations. Members spent some time brain storming and made a note of issues and possible solutions.

## **9. Any other business.**

Margaret shared Save the Children Northern Trust area Family Support Programme end of period report.

Margaret reminded members that the next Autism Café's will be 29<sup>th</sup> May in Cookstown and 8<sup>th</sup> October in Ballymena.

Margaret asked members to have a think about 2025/26 Budget. Should we continue with Grants in the usual format or discuss other options? This can be discussed in detail at a further meeting.

## **10. Date, time and venue of next meeting.**

Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> September, 2025 – Ballymena, venue to be confirmed.