



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

**Tuesday 25th March, 2025 at 2.00 p.m.**

**Venue: Youth Justice Services,  
7 Springwell Street,  
BALLYMENA,  
Co. Antrim,  
BT43 6AT.**

### **Attending**

<b>Margaret Purdie</b> (chair for this meeting)	Health and Wellbeing Officer (Antrim/Ballymena), NHSCT
<b>Linda Wylie</b>	Health and Wellbeing Programme Support Officer, NHSCT
<b>Nicola Carruthers</b>	Family Mediation NI
<b>Daniel MCurdy</b>	Libraries NI
<b>Jacqueline Bingham</b>	Libraries NI
<b>Nicola Carruthers</b>	Family Mediation Northern Ireland
<b>Will McDowell</b>	Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council
<b>Pamela McClelland</b>	Impact NI
<b>Grainne Rooney</b>	HSCNI Emotional Health & Wellbeing Practitioner
<b>Lexie Scott</b>	Ballymena Learning Together
<b>Pamela McClelland</b>	Impact Network
<b>Heidi Johnston</b>	Justice for Youth
<b>Sharon Caldwell</b>	Home-Start Antrim District
<b>Karen Cuddy</b>	Step up Programme NRC

### **1. Welcome & Apologies**

Margaret extended a warm welcome to everyone and her thanks to Heidi for providing the venue.

#### **Apologies:-**

Siobhan Murphy – A Safe Space to be Me

Caitriona Lennox – Springboard

Karen Brownlow – Ballymena South Community Cluster

Gerry McVeigh – Start 360  
Shaun Pakin – Ygam  
Christina O'Neill – All About Us  
Maurice Nixon – The King's Trust  
Sharon Doherty – RAISE  
Bronte Mayo - Patient and Client Council

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

Agreed as accurate.

## **3. Matters Arising**

None

## **4. Speaker Nicola Carruthers – Family Mediation NI**

Nicola brought a presentation on Family Mediation NI. She explained that they have recently gone through an organisational change as they have merged with Relate NI.

The organisation offers child focused mediation for separated families if at least one child under 18 is currently living at home. Their focus being that every child has the right to have a good relationship with Mum and Dad.

They also offer elder mediation and provide training for professional organisations.

Nicola explained that the majority of parents refer themselves but they also receive referrals from Social Services and Courts.

Parents set the Agenda of what is being discussed and all receive a written Agreement at the end of the sessions.

Parents make initial contact with the office and go onto a Waiting List for three weeks. They are assigned a mediator and take part in an assessment meeting via zoom. The same mediator sees both parents and they note ability and capacity to negotiate. Family Mediation NI then offers four 90 minute sessions face to face or online. Child inclusive mediation is also available.

Their main office is in Belfast and they provide services locally in suitable venues.

Nicola reported that 95% of families have reported a positive experience with Family Mediation Northern Ireland.

## 5. Member Update & New Members

### Maurice Nixon - The King's Trust

There will be a Drop-In session in our Belfast Offices for any family members, Young People or referral partners who would like to hear more about our programmes, familiarize themselves with our premises and talk to our Youth Development Leads.

Date: 11<sup>th</sup> April 2025

Time: 12pm – 2pm - Location: Unit 8a Weavers Court, Linfield Road, Belfast, BT12 5GH

### Catriona Lennox – Springboard

#### Steps to Employment (Digital Training 18+)

This programme is for those 18+ who need help / guidance to seek employment in the Ballymena area – ideally into Hospitality, Leisure or Tourism but the training will equip them with transferable skills for any industry / line of work.

Initially, the programme will be on line with 'hopefully' encouraging the person to meet up face to face (maybe over lunch). This course will be a 'take your time' course for those **only in the Ballymena and surrounding areas** (the old council areas), must be 18+ and be able to get access to IT and teams. Very much a 'one to one' approach potentially run over 3 or 4 weeks / 2/3 days per week, 10-3pm...with the aim being to meet face to face (when comfortable to do so) and then signpost to employment in a sector they want to be considered to work in. However, time required to go through the programme for an individual will vary and we have funding up to end March, if that's how long it may takes.

#### Destination Hospitality (Digital Training 16+ across all areas of the UK so open right across NI)

Supported and funded by Barclays. 2 week on line digital training (M-F 10 – 3pm ish) for those ready to go into work. Post course assistance will be given to find employment but the trainees need to 'come armed' with a CV, almost ready to go straight into work and be confident to join a group of 15 other people and actively participate with the group and trainer. We've already had great success finding employment for trainees competing this.



StepstoEmployment  
\_A5Flyer\_2025.pdf

## **Jacqueline Bingham – Libraries NI**

Libraries NI in the Antrim and Newtownabbey Area is concentrating this year on Library enjoyment and engagement. In April we will be celebrating Autism Awareness Week and this year the theme is “colour”, so we have quiet hour Lego sessions, bracelet making, suncatcher workshops and Sensory Storytimes available for families to mention a few.

We also have Intergenerational Week where we are encouraging young people to bring along a family member or maybe an elderly neighbour or someone in their circle that maybe is alone. Baby Boogie, Special Storytimes (one from Armstrong Storytelling Trust) and Rhythm and Rhyme sessions will be some of the activities libraries have planned.

We also have Easter Activities available. We have “free, family fun” going on in all our libraries. From free-flowing activity stations to flowerpot design workshops, card making, quizzes and more.

If you would like a sneak peak at what is available, I have print outs that you can take with you. Just ask me after the meeting.

I do a “mailing list” where I send information for the month ahead. In it you will get a breakdown of all activities and images so you can share, print or promote at your discretion. If you would like to join, just give me your email address at the end of the meeting.

My diary is now open for collaboration, visits or taster sessions so if your group would like a visit on location or in a library do let me know. If the library, you are interested in isn't in my district I can connect you with the right person.

## **Gerry McVeigh – Start 360**

- 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
- Autism Social Space – have carried out consultation with parents/young people. Feedback confirmed lack of social opportunities for autistic young people aged 18-25 and the need for a safe space for social activities for a small group of 8-10 at most. Next step will be to develop this space and a referral pathway for those that would like to attend.

- Fishing – will be starting fishing sessions after Easter to support young people to access the therapeutic benefits of nature and the outdoors. Depending on demand this could cater for 11-17 and/or 18-25 year olds on a weekly basis. More information and a referral pathway will be circulated when details finalised.
- Girls Group – running every Thursday 3.30-4.30pm for girls age 11-16 at Start360 in Ballymena supporting connection, learning and positive emotional health & wellbeing
- 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)

## **Tara McALEESE – MID & EAST ANTRIM BOROUGH COUNCIL - PARKS DEVELOPMENT**

**We held a BioBlitz Fun Day on Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> March in Carnlough – events included:**

Vitamin Sea (Meditation)  
 Whale Watching  
 Foraging Walks  
 RSPB Bird Walks  
 Artist Stations  
 NI Bat Group Volunteer Talk  
 Marvellous Mammals and more...

**Orienteering Courses throughout March – funded by Dept for Economy Multiply Funding and MEA – Last one 30<sup>th</sup> March @ Peoples Park**

Welcome to the **Orienteering Skills Course** happening at People's Park! Join us on **Sun, Mar 30, 2025 at 14:30** for an exciting adventure. Learn how to navigate through the park using only a map and compass. This hands-on course will teach you valuable skills for exploring the great outdoors. Whether you're a beginner or an experienced orienteer, this event is perfect for all levels. Don't miss out on this opportunity to improve your **navigational skills** and have fun in the process. See you there!

**Summer Programme** being looked at currently -we will include Love Parks Programme of events and Biodiversity University!

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

Grainne explained that EWTS work with Post Primary Schools and deal with all things mental health. They can assist in developing a workshop for individual schools needs. An EOI will be sent out shortly for next year.

## **Lexi Scott – Ballymena Learning Together**

Lexi said that BLT is continuing to tackle all issues. He indicated that all schools are reporting an increased need for access to counselling.

## **Heidi Johnston – Justice for Youth**

Heidi explained that she is a Practitioner for Youth Justice and covers the northern area which is a large catchment area. They work with young people who have committed crimes and aim to prevent them re-offending.

They are presently working with young people in the local neighbourhood and are delivering workshops on sexting.

## **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. Short courses are also available for Women Returners.

## **Pamela McClelland – Impact NI**

A Boccia tournament will take place on 7<sup>th</sup> April. This will take place in the Local primary school in Randalstown comprising young and older participants.

A toxic stress webinar will take place via zoom. Details to follow.

A funding scheme will open on 1<sup>st</sup> April re mental health and suicide prevention for community groups.

## **Sharon Caldwell – Homestart**

They are very busy. Still recruiting and training family volunteers to support children under 5.

Baby Bank is extremely busy. They are helping between 15-20 families per week. They are currently linking with the Baby Bank Alliance and establishing a very good system of donations. Presently trying to network to reduce parental stress and to relieve poverty.

Sharon would like to link in with a Baby Bank in Ballymena.

**Action:-** Margaret to establish a contact from baby bank which operates from Ballymena Baptist Church called Baby Basics.

## **Will McDowell – Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council**

Duke of Edinburgh Legacy Bursary Scheme. This commences on 9<sup>th</sup> April, 2025. Twenty four children to attend aged 11-18. Will to circulate more details.

## **Daniel McCurdy – Libraries NI**

Offering Coding Club and Chess Club at Ballymena Central Library also War Hammer sessions with the aim of attracting teenagers.

Easter Events – Great Eggscape which will take place in Ballymena Central Library.

Autism – A new sensory space has been launched in Ballymena Central Library.

## **6. RAISE**

Sharon Doherty from RAISE programme sent her apologies. Margaret and Lexie attended a local meeting regarding the initiative on 6<sup>th</sup> March. During the meeting a breakdown of areas and priorities being focused on was discussed.

Another meeting will take place in 9<sup>th</sup> April.

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

Kate has circulated Draft CYPSP Plan for 2025-2028. This plan will be used to create our own local level Action Plan. The areas we focused and talked about in November were School Disruption and Poverty & Cost of Living. Discussed ways to lay out the action plan with priorities and actions.

Margaret will circulate the Draft CYPSP Plan for 2025-2028 again. Please send any thoughts and ideas on priorities and actions to Margaret.

**Action:-** Margaret to circulate Draft CYPSP Plan for 2025-2028 again.

## **8. Update on Budget and Small Grants**

Margaret our budget had been spent with the successful small activity grants going to the below projects:

Small Grants allocated to: – Mae Murray Foundation – Online Music Workshops

Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council – Empowering Youth Voices and

All About Us – Adopt a Granny.

We hope to provide some feedback on the activities/projects organised during our May meeting. We also funded 20 Links counselling sessions for Children and young people from the FSH waiting list.

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

Margaret highlighted the Autism Cafes which are up and coming:-

The next café takes place at the Joey Dunlop Centre, Ballymoney on 2<sup>nd</sup> April, 29<sup>TH</sup> May at Cooktown Leisure Centre, 8<sup>th</sup> October 2025 The Braid Arts Centre, Ballymena and 3<sup>rd</sup> February at Mossley Mill Newtownabbey.

Attending Take 5 Health Fair at Ballymena NRC on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 10am -12pm

The month of March is Stop Smoking month. Please contact Margaret for any further information or promotional items and events.

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

Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> May, 2025 – Antrim, venue to be confirmed.