

Barnet On Point Child in Care Council

Annual Report April 2024 – March 2025



1. Introduction

'My Say Matters', Barnet's Child Participation and Family Involvement Strategy has been in place since May 2022 and BOP (Barnet on Point), our Children in Care Council forms part of this offer. This report provides a summary of BOP activity between April 2024 and March 2025.

My Say Matters and the concepts of co-production and youth participation are now securely embedded in Barnet enjoying impressive support across the council and partner agencies. Young people in care in Barnet want and expect to be listened to; BOP offers a space for them to meet socially with peers in similar circumstances but also to shape policy development and service delivery.

2. Barnet On Point – Our Child in Care Council

Every Local Authority is expected to have a child in care council. Barnet's forum is known as BOP - Barnet on Point, a name chosen by young people which remains popular.

BOP is supported by Laura Cope our Participation Officer for children in care.

All children and young people in Barnet's care are "members" of BOP but are free to decide if they take part or not. BOP provides regular social activities including in all school holidays organised by age group. Our older members take part in projects and have the opportunity to undertake more leadership roles.

BOP has chosen themes over the last few years: Belonging in 2022, Inclusion in 2023 and Influence in 2024. The theme of Unity is under consideration for 2025. These themes reflect the feedback from and experiences of our members and guide our work.

We also work to the 4 elements of the Lundy Participation Model; Space, Voice, Audience and Influence, the final quadrant ensuring that adults act on what young people say, and feedback to them about the impact their involvement is having.

Young people taking part tell us now important BOP is to them. Some members are ready to join straight away but for others it will be necessary for Laura to undertake outreach and develop their interest and confidence in taking part over a number of sessions. This involves a relationship based approach to build trust, and to create safety for our young people to share their unique ideas, talents and skills. A lot of our work takes place “behind the scenes” as we develop our projects and members leadership skills.

Feedback from BOP members about taking part during 2024/25:

“I will never forget you and everyone else who has helped me since I came to this country. The people need things like this to have fun experiences and meet other people, it’s very important. I have done many things that were new for me, I have so much fun and love it so much”

S, male young person, aged 16, seeking asylum in the UK

“I like sharing my ideas with people who want to hear what I have to say. I’ve been an active member since I was 13, so 3 years! I was already comfortable with public speaking before, but being in BOP has given me lots of experiences to stand up and talk in front of lots of people. I feel like we are influencing the service because if younger children see and hear what we do they’ll probably do the same.”

S, female young person, aged 17

“I like sharing my opinion with multiple people who actually listen to me and take action from it. For example, changing the term ‘contact’ to ‘family time’ because it sounds better and is what it actually is – and doesn’t sound oppressive”

T, male young person, aged 15

“I enjoyed the video project as my first experience, and since then we went to the Town Hall to share our videos with the politicians which was fun. I felt comfortable and like I could be myself, and everyone liked me the way I was. For anyone thinking of joining, I would say BOP is fun! You can have new experiences and make new friends with different people.”

D, female young person, aged 15

3. What have BOP Been Doing?

Below is a summary of BOP activities during the reporting period – you can also view some of our news stories on our webpage here [Barnet On Point – Children In Care Council | Barnet Council](#).

| Activity | Month | Numbers |
|---|------------------|-----------|
| Trampolining Juniors | February 2024 | 7 |
| Trampolining Seniors | February 2024 | 5 |
| Video Workshop (3 videos produced) | March/April 2024 | 7 |
| Frozen (discounted tickets to West End theatre) | April 2024 | 24 |
| Presentation at O&S Committee | June 2024 | 6 |
| Ofsted Big Listen – National Consultation Focus Group | June 2024 | 3 |
| School Site Visit – prep for Summer Celebration | July 2024 | 2 |
| Ice Skating Juniors | August 2024 | 8 |
| Ice Skating Seniors | August 2024 | 9 |
| Tea with the Mayor at Hendon Town Hall | October 2024 | 14 |
| A National Voice Awards - Manchester | October 2024 | 5 |
| Music Production Session with Ric Flo | December 2024 | 1 |
| BOP Talent Showcase at Chicken Shed Theatre | February 2025 | 8 |
| Playzone (Juniors) | February 2025 | 15 |
| Cambridge University Trip -Primary | March 2025 | 4 |
| Cambridge University Trip - Secondary | April 2025 | 2 |
| Playzone (Juniors) | April 2025 | 14 |
| Go Karting (Seniors) | April 2025 | 12 |
| Total Number of individual children and young people taking part in activities above | 2024-25 | 65 |
| Children and young people attending the Summer Celebration | July 2024 | 95 |



Playzone

"I liked Playzone because I got to hang out with my siblings, and go in the ball pits and do flips and make new friends. It was very fun and I enjoyed it. It was the second time I've been and I love it and I can't wait to go again"

M, female young person aged 11

"The children were so excited when they heard they were going back to Playzone for a second time. More importantly it was a time for the siblings to all meet up together and have fun together. It was lovely to see M helping her little brother around the ball park. The staff were very much hands on, helping the children and holding their hand and guiding them through and having fun. The children always talk about it and can't wait for another BOP activity!"

N, Foster Carer

4. Who comes to BOP?

BOP continues to offer to and engage a wide range of children and young people who reflect the community of Barnet. We are proud of our diversity.

Out of a total of 65 (excluding those attending the Summer Celebration), 33 female and 32 male children attended our events. We don't ask our members to tell us their sexuality or gender identity but we are aware we work with young people who regard themselves as part of the LGBT+ community and they have shared their experiences of homophobic bullying and stigma. We have supported trans and nonbinary young people and continue to consider what we can do to make our offer more inclusive. This includes following advice from training on how to support LGBT+ young people in care, using non-verbal welcoming cues e.g. the use of the Progress Pride flag at our events and on our merch.

23 children from preschool or primary age groups attended our events, 22 from secondary school and 20 of college age (16+).

18 children attending are White British with 6 other White children from Eastern and Central European heritage. 5 children have Gypsy Roma/Romani heritage and 24 are of Black

African or Caribbean or mixed heritage reflecting Caribbean, Irish, Turkish and East and West African backgrounds. 13 young people are from central and southeast Asia including China, the Philippines and Afghanistan.

Most but not all of our young people are fluent English speakers but with additional languages reflecting their cultural backgrounds. Similarly where our members declare a faith the largest groups are Christian of various denominations and then Muslim.

Where reported 15 of our members have a disability including physical and learning needs and a number have an EHCP. We ensure that our activities are inclusive by checking and sharing accessibility information and with adjustments such as the offer of sunflower passes at our Summer Celebration. Our participation team are experienced in working with disabled children and mindful of their needs.

5. BOP Video Project June – October 2024



7 BOP members developed 3 videos in Spring 2024 and these were shown to Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and an Ofsted inspector also in attendance, in June 2024. The videos covered the experiences of new asylum seeking young people, a personal account of receiving help from carers and professionals, and a “What’s Working Well/Even Better If” scorecard for professionals! Our young people really enjoyed making the videos, and received a reply from O&S Committee with an in-joke which went down well too!

The videos were submitted to the Coram [Amplify Awards 2024: Barnet On Point Children in Care Council - Video project - Coram Voice](#) and

we were delighted to win a runner up prize in the

Digital Media Category! In October half term BOP members travelled to Manchester to collect their awards where they met other young people in care from across the country and were able to collaborate on national consultation activity.

You can view the award submission here



ANV nomination
2024.1.pptx

6. **Summer Celebration July 2024**

Our Summer Celebration is our largest annual event and was held in July 2024. This year 95 young people, their carers and families attended, bringing total numbers to around 200. In keeping with our Influence theme, young people were involved in the preparation and planning for the event, for example undertaking a site visit to understand more about the logistics of the event. They also compared our certificate giving ceremony alongside Barnet's Mayor. A collaboration was undertaken with our unaccompanied asylum seeking ESOL learners (new to the UK) who attended the event with their teacher to host a graffiti art project, for which they received reward vouchers to recognise their work. This approach is part of BOPs intention to work alongside partners in the child in care system, and rather than “deliver to” young people, to seek their direct involvement in our offer.



We used the event programme to address feedback from our members - for example, they had told us they didn't know everyone in our leadership team and so we added a fun fact sheet with photos to introduce them. On the day leaders hosted an “Influence booth” and were able to speak with and get to know young people by being accessible and visible. The programme also contained features on famous care leavers as well as those excelling in

their chosen field to remind our young people that they have role models who are care experienced and that they can also succeed.

Previous themes of Belonging and Inclusion featured in the approach to the event in ensuring our activities were accessible to disabled children. For example, we liaised with our Children with Disabilities Team to promote the attendance of disabled children and offered a Sunflower pass to those needing to skip queues. The event ended with a Tug of War bringing us all together as one family. We retained inclusive visual cues with Progress Pride and international flag bunting and made sure our menu offer provided vegetarian, Halal and Kosher options – Caribbean and African food was provided by our staff from Barnet children's homes which is a notable highlight every year!

Our offer of activities included a sensory zone run by BICS for children with neurodiversity and disability needs, inflatables, sports, music, facepainting, a gaming bus, and the ever-popular ice cream van. We are forever grateful for the support of our staff volunteers who support professional providers to ensure that this ambitious event celebrates our remarkable children in care.

Feedback from our families and staff attending the Summer Celebration 2024:

"Thank you so much to all who organised Summer Celebration. We had a great time at Summer Celebration. Food was very delicious 😊. Fruit 🍓 🍊 was lovely. Music was very good 🎵. We also enjoyed the company. One of our teenage sons had been playing football and was enjoying it"

"It was lovely to see young people in care have an opportunity to just have fun and be celebrated."

"The variety of activities available from 0-18 and for all abilities! Little one enjoyed the under 5's room a great selection of toys. The food was absolutely amazing and delicious and plenty of it. Was great having the opportunity of meeting the staff, carers and the children"

"Lots of activities for the boys and lovely food choice! Also nice to see lots of familiar faces. Thanks for a great afternoon!"

"It was lovely to be part of an event that brought so many staff members supporting children in care in Barnet together. The food was AMAZING!"

"Great levels of participation and engagement very well planned I was supporting with BICS Chill out zone - popular with younger children in addition to some older ones who enjoyed the different sensory experience."

7. Talent Showcase at Chicken Shed Theatre February 2025

This event was organised to allow our members S, T, S, D and W who made the videos to show them to their family and network in a more personal and private environment. The studio of the Chicken Shed was chosen for this reason. As well as the videos one of our members D presented his nature photography alongside information about his equipment and artistic journey. We also showcased M drumming, and C singing two songs - one of which she had written herself. Laura our participation officer hosted the event which was a chance to share details of the preparation to deliver the event, including a session with care experienced musician Ric Flo. The audience of 40 included our DCS, young people's social workers, foster carers and own birth families, who were thrilled and entertained by our talented BOP members throughout the night.



Ric Flo Session with BOP December 2024



8. Influencing the Policy Making and Service Delivery

BOP is well known across the child in care system and has a strong profile in terms of brand and member activity. For this reason BOP are approached to take part in consultations and giving their feedback which they have done locally and also nationally.

This was recognised in the most recent Ofsted report of June 2024 where it was said:

“The CEO, leader, lead member and director of children’s services (DCS) ensure that the voices of children are heard and central to any future policy developments. Co-production is

a strength and is embedded, with numerous opportunities for children to present and engage with leaders so that experiences of care and of wider services inform decision-making.”

To drive dissemination of young people’s views, our Corporate Parenting Services leadership team have committed to hosting all staff “Lundy” briefings, which give a chance to discuss with our staff group how our learning from participation work can be acted on and embedded. The last briefing took place on 11 September 2024 and was well attended by staff from across the service who were able to watch the 3 videos made by BOP and talk about the personal commitments they would make in response in their own practice. We also undertook a Mentimeter exercise looking at language used by professionals which occasionally is not child centred, for example calling their home “the placement”, or using words like “transition”, “ready for discharge” or “emotional regulation”. The staff team brainstormed alternatives such as “being ready to move on” or “having big and little feelings”, which they are committed to use going forward as well as asking young people for their own choice of words.

3 of our BOP members took place in a focus group for Ofsted’s Big Listen, part of a national consultation with children and young people in 2024, allowing them to contribute their views and experiences to the development of the inspectorate body and regulator.

In April 2025 12 BOP members took part in a consultation which will inform the needs analysis for the new Youth Strategy for Barnet; this will cover the educational and recreational leisure time activities and facilities available for 13 to 19 year olds (up to 25 if SEND) available in the borough. BOP gave their views on services including leisure, youth, sports, arts and cultural facilities, libraries and green spaces across the borough.

In October half term BOP were delighted to offer 14 of our children and young people the chance to have Afternoon Tea with the Mayor and to receive a robe show and presentation on the history of Barnet and civic traditions. This event which took place at Hendon Town Hall was to ensure that our members get to visit the home of local democracy. Finding out more about the history and traditions of Barnet and active citizenship is part of helping those attending feel connected to Barnet geographically as home and reinforcing the Council’s Corporate Parenting duty. We are very grateful to Mr Mayor



and his team for their generous support in making this event possible.

BOP are being asked to co-produce the new Corporate Parenting Strategy and work is already underway to plan their involvement. This will include a range of engagement sessions over the summer holidays and creative ways to involve disabled young people in taking part. Art work will be commissioned by young people to create the strategy “look and feel”. The work will be coordinated by the Strategy, Insight and Commissioning Team with involvement of our BOP participation worker Laura Cope.

On 1st May 2025 2 BOP members, S 17 and D 16, were involved in the recruitment of the new Director of Children’s Services sitting on the Youth Stakeholder Panel. Questions asked were co-produced with young people and BOP’s questions were

- What does success look like to you, for Barnet's children and young people? How have you solved problems in your current job to make things better?
- How have you supported children in care councils in the past, what have you learnt and what would you do here in Barnet if you get the job?

Alongside 4 other panel members our BP young people were required to give structured feedback about each of the candidates which they did to a very high standard. We were very impressed by our members maturity and engagement in this important task and it offered them excellent work experience that they can draw on as part of their own development journey. We are delighted that BOP are contributing to the outcome in such a meaningful way – they told us afterwards that they enjoyed the experience.

9. Conclusion and Recommendations

BOP is an established forum with a core number of experienced members who undertake leadership roles. The wider offer ensures a larger number of our young people can enjoy the fellowship of coming together with other young people in care. Our work continues to be trauma informed and tailored to the needs of our members. This means careful thought goes into the work we do, in terms of planning for activities, during the event and debriefing with young people afterwards. We know our work with BOP members can provide an outlet for overcoming difficult early experiences, building self esteem and finding an identity as a care experienced person that is positive and shared with peers. We are very proud of our members and will continue to support them to be proud of themselves too.

- During 2025-26 we will focus on the co production of the Corporate Parenting Strategy which is an ambitious project for our members to take part in, and making sure as many children and young people can take part as possible.
- We will maintain our offer of social activities and the planning for the Summer Celebration 2025 is already underway. This will include considering the needs of children who are more marginalised as a result of protected characteristics or other factors.
- Partnership working with the Corporate Parenting Service will ensure that the challenge young people provide back to the service continues to be heard and acted on.

Liz Shaw, Practice and Learning Manager and Laura Cope Participation Officer

1st May 2025.