

Director of Children's Service
The London Borough of Barnet
Building 4, North London Business Park
Oakleigh Road South
London N11 1NP

contact: Robert McCulloch-Graham
tel: 020 8359 7642
e-mail: robert.mcculloch-graham@barnet.gov.uk
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Children's Service Budget Proposals Consultation 2012/13

As you'll be aware, the Government's spending review has reduced the amount of money available for the Council to spend over the coming years. Barnet, like all local authorities, is faced with making some difficult decisions on how best to continue services with reduced resources, while trying to minimise the impact on residents.

Over the next three years the Council is proposing savings of £43.4 million, so all service areas need to make budget reductions. Last year the Children's Service reduced budgets by £6.4m. This included a reduction in school improvement support (this became a traded service); reshaping youth services; reducing the number of full children's centres; and reducing the behavioural support team. We also made staffing changes that reduced budgets with a minimal impact on services. The Children's Service also invested £2.5m to meet unprecedented pressure on children's social care and to fund more preventative services.

Your input shaped the way we changed services. Following widespread consultation, we retained a network of children's centres including 13 full service children's centres; and we targeted the remaining activities budget to ensure that vulnerable young people have access to youth provision.

Challenges and priorities

The Children's Service continues to face significant pressures. Barnet has seen a 22% increase in births since 2003. This growing population places strain on all Children's Service areas including social care and primary school places. The costs of high level services such as placements for children with Special Educational Needs and children in care also continue to increase.

We remain committed to ensuring the safety of all Barnet's children, and ensuring that every school is a good school and sufficient school places are available.

The following principles shape our work as we strive to improve continuously the service to children and young people in Barnet in the context of a reducing budget:

- target vulnerable groups in order to 'narrow the gap' between those who may not achieve their potential and all children in Barnet
- provide effective early intervention and prevention
- focus on families

- offer personalisation of provision
- provide better for less through intelligent commissioning of services
- enable parents and the big society to nurture Barnet's children

Budget proposals for 2012/13

For 2012/13 the Children's Service needs to find further savings of £1,044,000. To help meet demographic pressures, the Children's Service is requesting investment of £750,000 for 2012/13. The proposed savings for 2012/13 to 2014/15 are set out in the Cabinet report on [Business Planning 2012/13 – 2014/15](#). More detail on these is given in the following consultation document.

We are trying to minimise the impact on services wherever possible by making savings through efficiencies and income generation. However, some proposals will impact on services. The main proposals to reduce the budget that we are consulting on are: youth services; corporate parenting; adoption and fostering allowances related to children in care; and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

Tell us your views

We are approaching this with an open mind and are keen to hear your views. Your views and opinions are important to us and will help us to make the right decisions. Alternative ideas or proposals will be considered in full.

In addition to this consultation letter we will be consulting with groups particularly affected by individual savings proposals. If you are invited to take part in other consultation exercises, please be assured that all responses to consultation undertaken by the Children's Service will be taken into account and therefore you need only reply once if that is more convenient. This and other Children's Service consultation documents are available online at <http://engage.barnet.gov.uk/>

You can give your views:

by online questionnaire:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/BarnetCSBudgetConsultation2012-2013>

by email:

Childrens.ServiceConsultation@barnet.gov.uk

by post:

to the address at the top of this letter

The consultation closes on 6 January 2012. The Council will take into account your responses before a decision is made by Cabinet and Council on 20 February 2012 and 6 March 2012 respectively.

As I'm sure you are all too aware, there are challenging times ahead and none of these proposals have been put forward lightly. By working together, I hope we can help each other to maintain our focus on improving outcomes for all children and young people in Barnet, especially those at risk of not achieving their potential.

Kind regards,



Robert McCulloch-Graham
Director of Children's Service

Consultation on Children's Service proposals to achieve budget savings for 2012/13

Your chance to have your say on the proposals

Your views and opinions are important to us and will help us to make the right decisions. You can help us by completing the questionnaire which can be found online at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/BarnetCSBudgetConsultation2012-2013> Or you can print out and complete the form below.

(If replying in hard copy, it would be helpful if you could either print out the document and make comments in the boxes provided or use the questions as paragraph headings for your response. Please post your response to the address given in the letter above.)

When responding please include your name and the capacity in which you are writing. This will help us to understand the feedback you give us.

Name	Capacity in which writing (for example, parent, name of school, of voluntary organisation etc.)

1. Youth Services

We are looking at a number of ways that savings could be found within the budget for youth services. These include reducing the budget for youth and play activities, joining up work currently delivered by more than one organisation, and reducing staffing posts that aren't delivering frontline services. Within the reduced budget we would continue to prioritise support for the voluntary sector and local communities to build capacity, and to prioritise support for vulnerable young people.

There are three key proposals to achieve total savings of £500,000

Proposal 1A: There are two options: either reduce funding for youth and play activities, or start to charge for some activities and make a smaller reduction in funding for youth and play activities. Any charge for activities would need to be means tested and ensure that vulnerable young people are not disadvantaged.

Option X: Reduce funding for youth and play activities by £150,000 (from £254,000 to £104,000) and do not introduce charging for activities.

Option Y: Reduce funding for youth and play activities by £75,000 (from £254,000 to £179,000), and introduce charging for some activities to generate an income of £75,000.

Proposed saving: £150,000, achieved by either option X or Y

Your reply

1A, Option X - To what extent do you agree or disagree with option X?

Please tick () one box only

Strongly Agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree or disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
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Please give reasons for your answer in the box below. Please outline any concerns or note any additional comments you have about the impact of the proposal.

1A, Option Y - To what extent do you agree or disagree with option Y?

Please tick () one box only

Strongly Agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree or disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
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Please give reasons for your answer in the box below. Please outline any concerns or note any additional comments you have about the impact of the proposal.

Proposal 1B: Re-negotiate contracts within the areas of advocacy, out of school activities for young people with disabilities, and universal art programmes to reduce costs. This would result in a reduction in the services delivered. However, we will work with providers to try and minimise the impact.

Proposed saving: £135,000

Your reply

1B - To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal?

Please tick () one box only

Strongly Agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree or disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
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Please give reasons for your answer in the box below. Please outline any concerns or note any additional comments you have about the impact of the proposal.

Proposal 1C: Reduce non frontline staff posts and continue to deliver core functions by integrating teams and building capacity in the voluntary sector.

Proposed saving: £215,000

Your reply

1C - To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal?

Please tick () one box only

Strongly Agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree or disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
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Please give reasons for your answer in the box below. Please outline any concerns or note any additional comments you have about the impact of the proposal.

2. Corporate Parenting

Children in care are among Barnet's most vulnerable and supporting these children and young people in order to 'narrow the gap' remains a key priority. No budget reductions were proposed for children's social care last year. Given the significant budget savings that have to be found across the council we need to seek efficiencies, including social care.

Proposal 2A: Reduce the budget for computers provided to children in care and foster carers by better targeting of resources to need.

Proposed savings: £40,000

Your reply

2A - To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal?

Please tick () one box only

Strongly Agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree or disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
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Please give reasons for your answer in the box below. Please outline any concerns or note any additional comments you have about the impact of the proposal.

Proposal 2B: Reduce the budget for individual tuition for children in care by approximately 40% by better targeting of resources to need and through closer working with schools to minimise the impact on children.

Proposed savings: £40,000

Your reply

2B - To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal?

Please tick () one box only

Strongly Agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree or disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
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Please give reasons for your answer in the box below. Please outline any concerns or note any additional comments you have about the impact of the proposal.

Proposal 2C: Reduce non frontline support for children in care around educational and health outcomes and the staff training budget.

Proposed savings: £20,000

Your reply

2C - To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal?

Please tick () one box only

Strongly Agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree or disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
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Please give reasons for your answer in the box below. Please outline any concerns or note any additional comments you have about the impact of the proposal.

3. Adoption and fostering allowances related to children in care

When children are fostered both they and their foster parents receive allowances to cover costs such as clothing, transport and special occasions. These have not been reviewed for some time and we need to ensure that they are appropriate and being applied consistently. We expect the review will result in small reductions in the allowances that children in care receive, for example it would be expected that increased use of Oyster travel cards could reduce the spend on taxis. We would also review and reduce the annual allowance given to those newly adopting, while ensuring the child's needs are met. Funding for both adoptors and foster carers would be agreed for shorter periods with regular reviews introduced to ensure funding is appropriate to need.

Proposal 3: Review and reduce the overall costs of allowances given to children in care, foster carers and those newly adopting by carrying out more regular reviews to ensure that allowances are appropriate and being applied consistently.

Proposed savings: £110,000.

Your reply

3 - To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal?

Please tick () one box only

Strongly Agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree or disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
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Please give reasons for your answer in the box below. Please outline any concerns or note any additional comments you have about the impact of the proposal.

4. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

The majority of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) are funded by NHS Barnet. The Council currently contributes £763,000 a year which is primarily focused on commissioning support for those with moderate needs. A new CAMHS referral model was formally introduced in September 2011 to make processes more efficient and reduce duplication. It is anticipated that this will result in savings in 2012/13. We are also proposing to work with providers to find efficiencies, such as joining up teams, which enable us to reduce the commissioning budget for CAMHS with a minimal impact on services.

Alongside this the NHS is proposing a broader reconfiguration of CAMHS services, which would be likely to take place over the next few years.

Proposal 4: Work with providers to find efficiencies, such as joining up teams, which enable us to reduce the commissioning budget for CAMHS with a minimal impact on services.

Proposed savings: £100,000

Your reply

4 - To what extent do you agree or disagree with this proposal?

Please tick () one box only

Strongly Agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree or disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
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Please give reasons for your answer in the box below. Please outline any concerns or note any additional comments you have about the impact of the proposal.

Any other comments or suggestions

The Council will consider all responses to this consultation. Please use the box below for any further comments that you wish to make. This could include any different ways for the Council to make the funding reductions or if you feel that the proposals could have a positive or negative equalities impact (for example on those with disabilities, of a certain race, or of a certain sex).

Thank you for your time and your contribution to this consultation.