



In this edition of my Chair's Report, I talk about Learning Disability Week and adoption. I would welcome Board Members to comment on any item covered should they wish to do so.

*Best wishes,
Cllr Maureen Worby, Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board*

Learning Disability Week

Learning Disability Week is a national event that was first started by Mencap in order to raise awareness of the issues affecting people with a learning disability. Barking and Dagenham have, for a number of years, celebrated learning disability weeks locally with support from senior officers, service users, care providers and a wide range of services representing health, social care, transport, leisure, community safety and arts and leisure.

This year Learning Disability Week will be held between Monday 18 July and Friday 22 July 2016. Following consultation with service users, it was agreed that this year's programme would reflect the Council's vision of 'One Borough, One Community, London's Growth Opportunity' with events focussing on the personal growth and development of residents with learning disabilities with a particular focus on employment and resilience.

A series of events that are open to residents of Barking and Dagenham with a learning disability as well as their families/carers take place during the week.

The themes and activities over the five days will be:

- Volunteering/Creating employment opportunities, including a talk from Carol Hackett, the manager at Heathlands, who employs Michael who has a learning disability. You can hear about their experiences and talk about employment opportunities.
- Heritage and Arts, where Valence House opens its doors to a sensory experience of Touch, Feel and Wear in an interactive session with the past
- Getting Active, where people can come and try out a new sport such as wheelchair basketball, cycling, football and more. Arts and crafts sessions and soft play are also available.
- Health and Culture, with healthy cultural food options, the chance to take a health check and to learn about healthy lifestyle options.
- Keeping Active and Personal Budgets, with a sponsored walk around Barking and a chance to meet providers who you can provide services via personal budgets

For more information please contact Cathie Kelly; 0208 724 1609 or email Cathie.kelly@lbbd.gov.uk



Spotlight on Adoption

The policy of the council is to work with children and families to support them live happily together in a family unit such that the children in the family are protected and are not placed at risk of significant harm.

For some children it is considered unsafe for them to live at home and when this happens they are removed from the care of their parents and placed in care, that is, the state (Barking and Dagenham Council) becomes the child's corporate parent and has responsibilities for the child's care and well being.

Should all efforts to return the child safely to the family fail, then alternative long term care options such as adoption are considered for the child. Adoption is not considered lightly as it is the permanent removal of a child from its family and in some cases this means a child will not see its birth parents again. Adoption is a legal process and is the decision of the family courts.

Successive governments have been concerned about the low rate at which children in care become adopted. This is because children in care generally have poorer life outcomes than children not raised in the care system. This means that children in care, for example, are more likely to be unemployed, to experience mental health problems, to become homeless and to have their own children removed from them.

The Secretary of State for Children, Edward Timpson wrote to the Council in March 2016 asking questions about the adoption performance of the Council because it had reduced from the previous year. At Barking and Dagenham, in the three years between April 2013 and March 2016, there have been 77 children adopted. The majority (43) were aged below 3 years old.

The reasons for performance reducing are many and include

- a dedicated focus on working to ensure that children are adopted rather than placing them in less secure options such as long term fostering,
- a focus on working to find adoptive families for disabled children and children with complex needs and
- a desire to ensure that sibling groups are not separated but adopted together.

Working to achieve adoption for our children has taken longer but the council remains in support of adoption where possible and appropriate rather than leaving children in care even if this means it takes longer.

On behalf of the Minister, the Director of Children's Service, Helen Jenner and others met with staff from the Department of Education (DfE) who spoke in very positive terms about the work of the teams at Barking and Dagenham and understand that our approach is the better one for children despite the timescales. We will continue to keep the DfE informed of actions we are taking to improve the timeliness of adoption. Managers have also been invited by the DfE to take part in future workshops to discuss these issues.

News from NHS England

Increase in positive experiences of GP services

New data has shown that the majority of people are increasingly positive about their GP care. The GP Patient Survey 2016 compiled responses from more than 800,000 people across the country on their experience of healthcare services provided by GP surgeries. Key findings included:

- 85.2% described the overall experience of their GP surgery as good and increase of 0.4 % on 2014-15
- 73.4% of patients rated their overall experience of making an appointment as good, a slight increase of 0.1%
- 75.9% of patients are satisfied with the hours that their GP surgery is open, which is 1.0% higher than 2014-15
- Overall awareness of online services has increased in the last year. 31.3% of respondents are aware that their practice offers online booking, 4.3% higher than the previous year

Be Clear on Cancer campaign

The latest Be Clear on Cancer campaign is encouraging people who get out of breath doing things they used to be able to do, or have had a cough for three weeks or more, to see their GP and have their symptoms checked out. Earlier diagnosis of patients means a higher likelihood of successful treatment that can cure cancer or improve quality of life for patients.

Previous Be Clear on Cancer campaigns had an encouraging impact on early diagnosis and clinical outcomes for patients. In the period following the first national lung cancer campaign, around 700 more people were diagnosed, 400 more were diagnosed at an early stage compared with the same period in the previous year, and around 300 more had surgery as a first treatment.

Once people come forward to their GP with symptoms that need investigating, diagnostic services must be fit-for-purpose, and a recently-launched implementation plan lays out the first steps towards delivering improvements, including an additional £15million investment in earlier diagnosis this year.

NHS England have asked CCGs to plan for appropriate diagnostic services and NHS England is also moving forward with work to ensure that, by 2020, all patients referred by their GP with a suspicion of cancer, including those who come forward as a result of a Be Clear on Cancer campaign, receive a diagnosis or have cancer ruled out within 28 days. Five test sites drawn from across England will test the rules for the new standard and over the coming months work will be done to understand the challenges and opportunities presented by the new standard.

Health and Wellbeing Board Meeting Dates

Tuesday 27 September 2016, Tuesday 22 November 2016, Tuesday 31 January 2017, Tuesday 14 March 2017, Tuesday 9 May 2017

All meetings start at 6pm and are held in the conference room of the Barking Learning Centre.