

27 August 2021

Dear Parent/Carer

**Update on Therapies: Speech and Language Therapy; Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy**

Since the last communication and meetings held with parent carers on 19<sup>th</sup> July, we have received questions from some parents in relation to the future of the service. In response, we would like to update you on our plans and to answer the questions which have been most frequently asked.

Barnet Council and North Central London NHS Clinical Commissioning Group (NCLCCG) who fund these services have been working closely with the NHS locally to ensure that, despite the challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic, we remain committed to providing high-quality, person centred support to children, their families, carers and schools in a timely way.

Since 2018, these services have been provided by North East London NHS Foundation Trust (NELFT). However, the London Borough of Barnet, NCLCCG, NELFT and Whittington Health NHS Trust have agreed that Whittington Health NHS Trust is best placed to provide these services from 1 September 2021.

**All scheduled and booked appointments will still operate as planned.**

Over the coming months, during the autumn school term and beyond, Whittington Health will be investing in the service to make necessary improvements. They will be focussing on reducing waiting times for assessment and treatment and ensuring that services are more resilient.

We realise that you may still have questions. We have answered the questions we have received below, and we will continue to contact you to provide you with further updates. A further planned communication is being prepared for the week



**Barnet Education and Learning Service**  
2 Bristol Avenue, Colindale, NW9 4EW

commencing 6 September 2021 which will contain contact details for key leads and clinicians.

We also want to make clear that collectively *our absolute priority* is to ensure that everyone in Barnet who needs it has access to high quality services which put the needs of the child at the heart, and which can be accessed in a timely way.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "H. Phelan". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Dr Helen Phelan  
Director SEND & Inclusion,  
Barnet Council and BELS

On behalf of:

Chris Munday, Executive Director Children and Family Services, Barnet Council;  
North Central London Clinical Commissioning Group  
Whittington Health  
North East London Foundation Trust (NELFT)

## **Answers to Parent Carer Questions**

### **Do you have any information about Whittington Health - the new provider?**

Whittington Health NHS Trust aims to help local people live longer and healthier lives by providing safe, personal, coordinated care for the community they serve.

It provides hospital care from Whittington Hospital in Archway and community care services to over 500,000 people living in Islington and Haringey as well as other London boroughs including Barnet, Enfield, Camden and Hackney. As one organisation providing both hospital and community services, it is known as an 'integrated care organisation'.

In its latest inspection report, published in March 2020, the Care Quality Commission rated Whittington Health as Good overall and Outstanding for being caring. It found that its community services for children and young people had made considerable improvements in meeting target times for people accessing these services and that its staff provided individualised child-centred care.

### **How will they manage Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) assessments with the huge demand on resources?**

Whittington Health has been providing mutual aid support to assist in clinical assessments for Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) in Barnet since May 2021. It will continue to build on the work already started and support children and young people with assessments for EHCPs.

At the same time, there will be a piece of work across North Central London to review how therapy services are provided and help the service in Barnet to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic. Additional capacity for clinical staffing is being identified. There will be no change to planned assessment/provision already agreed.

Whittington Health will work alongside and engage with existing children and young people who use the service, their parents and carers and schools to develop any changes to the service to ensure that they continue to meet the needs of present and future service users: taking the best of the current approach as well as delivering even higher quality, timely care.

**When was the original contract due to run until?**

The original contract with North East London NHS Foundation Trust was due to run until 31 August 2021.

A managed transfer is underway between Whittington Health NHS Trust and NELFT to support safe, smooth high quality service delivery.

Transition is anticipated to be between 1 September to 31 December 2021.

All planned care will continue as normal during the transition.

**Will EHCP assessments be cancelled?**

No, if you have an assessment booked it will run as planned. You will continue to be seen at the same time, in the same location and by the same member of the team\*.

However, over time we want to speed up access to EHCP assessments and access to any support or therapy needs identified by the assessment.

The EHCP assessment process will continue under Whittington Health in the same way as it does now, and Whittington Health will be continuing to support therapy staff to maintain the timelines set out in law.

This will be closely monitored with Barnet Local Authority and Barnet Education and Learning Service (BELS) to ensure that assessments continue to be undertaken within the statutory timescales.

**If we have an appointment booked soon does that mean it will be cancelled or we will have one appointment and then my child will have to get used to another therapist?**

No, all existing appointments will run as planned. You will continue to be seen at the same time, in the same location and by the same member of the team\*.

All staff who currently work in the Children's Integrated Therapies team will transfer to Whittington Health NHS Trust. They will continue in their current roles and if you



**Barnet Education and Learning Service**  
2 Bristol Avenue, Colindale, NW9 4EW

currently see a particular member of the team, this is unlikely to change as a result of the changes to the organisation which runs it\*.

Over time, we hope to address the recruitment and retention challenges the service has faced (alongside many other similar services across the country) by recruiting additional professionals to join the team.

**Will my child continue to get the same level of support?**

Yes, all children will continue to receive support and care as they do at present.

\*Subject to normal staffing changes, not linked to this service transition.