Joining the dots...

A Barnardo’s Northern Ireland conference on making extended schools work
Barnardo’s began work in Belfast in 1899 with an ‘Ever Open Door’ service in Great Victoria Street. Today many things have changed about the way we operate; we no longer run orphanages but work to keep children in their own communities. Barnardo’s spends £10.5 million here and works with 14,000 children, young people and their families in over 45 services throughout Northern Ireland.

We have vast experience in many areas of child care from fostering to services for disabled children and young people leaving care. So what, may you ask, do we know about education? Well we know that it is one of the most important areas in a child’s life, not only for their emotional well being and their future employment chances, but also education has a vital role in alleviating major disadvantage. Anyone working in education knows that too.

We believe that the advent of recent Government announcements on the delivery of the extended schools agenda is a positive opportunity to deliver the kind of family support and preventative services that will support families and allow children to maximise their educational achievement.

We are holding this conference today because we believe extended schools affords the voluntary sector the welcome opportunity to engage alongside schools. We don’t want to tell teachers how to teach but we do know about the best ways to offer family support; whether that is helping children dealing with bereavement, young people in care or teenage mothers continuing their education. We hope by the end of today you will have a clear idea about what a voluntary organisation like Barnardo’s can do for you. We are a large, UK-wide charity and we have seen how the extended schools agenda has been implemented in England and Wales. We can not only be a provider of services in schools but a bridge to other partners and funders.

For example our work in Sunnylands Primary School in Larne pulls in a number of different Barnardo’s services when needed, such as services for parents from our Parenting Matters service, Pyramid Plus, Learning Together and our Child Bereavement Service. We can also point the way to other voluntary organisations and form partnerships to deliver services.

Barnardo’s has worked in some of the most disadvantaged areas of Northern Ireland but we always try to tailor our work to the specific needs of children.

Extended schools isn’t only about extended hours, it is about extending the services available to children and their families in ways that work for that particular community.

Barnardo’s believes that the advent of this new policy agenda from Government regarding extended schools is a good time to share information. As adults we owe it to our children and young people to make this work to the best of our ability.

Case Study – Sunnylands Primary School

Sunnylands Primary School in Carrickfergus draws many of its pupils from districts which suffer some of the most serious levels of deprivation in Northern Ireland. It has teamed up with Barnardo’s to offer a term time after-school club for three afternoons a week with Learning Together and a range of programmes and support for parents and children through our Parenting Matters service. Using spare accommodation in the school, the project provides parenting advice, behaviour support programmes, a child bereavement programme, infant massage, and a special programme for children in P3 and P4 to enhance confidence and self esteem.

The school’s principal, Jim Wilson, says that the scheme has resulted in increased parental engagement, and has helped promote greater self esteem and confidence among children and parents who have participated in the programmes. However, Mr Wilson feels the scheme would benefit greatly from an outreach /link worker or teacher to support the whole initiative.

“The reality is that due to years of social deprivation, it can be difficult to engage parents for various reasons. The appointment of support personnel, possibly shared between clusters of schools could achieve so much more.”
Below find listed some of the services already offered by Barnardo’s Northern Ireland in an educational setting. This is not an exhaustive list and new services are in development.

**Child Bereavement Service**
Barnardo’s Child Bereavement Service has delivered a therapeutic counselling service to children and young people since June 1998. They have worked in partnership with a number of schools in supporting young people to manage their grief process. The service responds to the needs of the school and can provide staff training, suicide awareness for staff and crisis intervention. They have also worked with groups of pupils when there has been a traumatic death e.g. a student killed in a car accident outside the school. The service has produced a free booklet for parents and other carers on how to talk to children about death.

Copies can be obtained from catherine.meighan@barnardos.org.uk
Helpline Number: 028 9064 5899

**Edenbrooke Family Project**
The service began 3 years ago in response to a request from Edenbrooke Primary School which had been badly affected by a paramilitary feud in the area. The aim was to rebuild relationships between parents and create a safe place for them in the school. The service also aims to encourage an interest in and value for education among parents and support for their children’s schooling and establish a true partnership between school, home and the wider community. The parents’ group offers courses in computers, crafts, parenting, health and well being there is a breakfast club and homework club for P4/P5 as well as an induction for P1 children and their parents. The Family and Schools Worker has established links with different groups working in the community and the local nursery schools with a view to developing a holistic strategy for 0-6 year olds in the area. Similar work is also carried out at Tullycarnet Family Project where Barnardo’s has worked in partnership with the school for over 10 years.

“The aim was to rebuild relationships between parents and create a safe place for them in the school.”

**Family/School Group Conferencing**
Works in the Southern Board area providing a family/school mediation service. This can be for young people affected by bullying, missing school, behavioural problems and other family issues. Uses the group conferencing model as a way to provide solutions for the entire family, or school community.

“Uses the group conferencing model as a way to provide solutions for the entire family, or school community.”

**Learning Together**
This service has provided support services throughout the Belfast area to improve the numeracy and literacy of primary school children. At the moment it works in four areas of north and west Belfast. Recently the service also joined up with our Professional Fostering service to provide academic support to looked after children. They offer additional educational support to enhance academic achievement; a structured, individualised, one-to-one service with qualified teachers in a child’s school or specific setting according to needs; help with numeracy and literacy skills across KS1, KS2 and KS3 and helps to stimulate and promote confidence and self-esteem.

**Pyramid Plus Service**
Research and experience has shown that children who are experiencing difficulties because of low self esteem and lack of confidence can and do benefit from the opportunity of belonging to a short term therapeutic activity group. Pyramid Plus offers up to 10 children at a time the opportunity to participate in a pyramid club. The clubs are school-based; they usually run after school 1 ½ hours per week for 10 weeks. (The P7 Transition Clubs start mid spring term and is run in 8 week cycles). A project co-ordinator and at least 2 trained volunteers run each club. Since 2004, 441 children have directly benefited from Pyramid Plus in clubs throughout the NH&SSB area.

“Pyramid Plus offers up to 10 children at a time the opportunity to participate in a pyramid club.”

**Young Parents’ Network**
Barnardo’s began working with School Age Mothers (SAM) in the Coleraine area in 1999. Since then the SAM model has developed significantly offering a holistic model of support to young women who are pregnant or a parent to enable them to continue their education in all five Education and Library Board areas. YPN has a regional co-ordinating role to make sure that the SAM model is implemented consistently throughout Northern Ireland. While not working directly with pupils a co-ordinator can visit schools to give an overview of how the service works.
What can Barnardo’s Northern Ireland offer schools?

We can offer co-ordination of our services to interested schools. These could include specific services such as Pyramid Plus club, after school, crèches and parenting classes. These services can be in school time or out of school time depending on the needs of the school and the wider community.

We can offer advice and guidance in relation to becoming an extended school and assist schools to deliver services that best meet the needs of children and families.

Please contact: Billy McMillan, Assistant Director, Barnardo’s Northern Ireland on 028 9067 2366 or billy.mcmillan@barnardos.org.uk

Useful Websites for Extended School Services

Regional Training Unit
http://www.rtuni.org/

The Regional Training Unit is the education service’s Leadership and Staff College. It supports the professional development of leaders and senior managers in all schools in Northern Ireland. The site includes an Extended Schools section with a Tool Kit for schools interested in establishing extended school services.

Department of Education, Northern Ireland
http://www.deni.gov.uk/

This site provides a range of information including ‘Extended Schools: schools, families and communities – working together’ specific guidance for schools in Northern Ireland.

Barnardo’s
http://www.barnardos.org.uk/northernireland

For further information on Barnardo’s and copies of this document.

Continyou
http://www.continyou.org.uk/

With experience in supporting Extended Schools in England, this site contains a wide range of information on services, recruitment and supporting staff, including access to useful reports and resources.

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