



Barnardo's Scotland - In This Together

COVID – 19 - Responding to the needs of children,
young people and families

**1st June - Edinburgh Oxfangs The Wee Hub
(that could 😊)**

Barnardo's Registered Charity
Nos. 216250 and SC037605

**Believe in
children**
 **Barnardo's
Scotland**

Edinburgh Oxgangs – The Wee Hub

As the Covid-19 pandemic emerged and the message to stay at home was adopted, Barnardo's Scotland teams across the country looked for new and innovative ways to continue supporting children, young people and families during this unique time.

A multi-disciplinary team from across the South East locality provide direct support to children and families to ensure that as many primary to secondary children and young people with social, emotional and behavioural needs as possible can remain in their own schools, families and communities, whenever that is safe and appropriate. The team quickly developed a model of remote support so we could continue working with families, maintaining important relationships and jointly addressing emerging issues despite not being able to see each other in person.

This support soon evolved further to include community-based direct contact in carefully considered circumstances where there was a strong indication that the need for staying at home at all times was outweighed by the benefits of socially distanced time spent with a support worker. This support happens outdoors wherever possible in venues such as families' gardens or public spaces, in parks and other community spaces.

At the same time the City of Edinburgh Council created a number of school-based Hubs providing support with learning tasks and childcare initially for the children of essential workers, which developed to include other children and young people. However discussions with our partners in the local authority confirmed that for some children or young people who were likely to benefit from this kind of support their individual needs or circumstances meant that the Hubs would not be able to give them the safe, valuable and rewarding experience that was intended. The team's long history of partnership



working with the local authority, Edinburgh Council, has been based on creating new and innovative ways to meet the needs of children and young people where existing provision is unable to do this, so it was natural that this got us thinking.

The Barnardo's Scotland building at Oxgangs is normally a multi-purpose facility offering comfortable and nurturing spaces for contact with children, young people and families as well as being the local and regional administrative base. However the pandemic meant that a building that is normally full of activity, which is normally a place from which incredible things happen, was almost unused so an idea began to emerge...

After a period of careful planning and consultation with the local authority, other Barnardo's Scotland children's services and our internal Safety Team, the Oxgangs office has now been repurposed as 'The Wee Hub', and has become the site for recreational and emotional support to eight children and young people who can't find the support they need within the school-based Hubs. Children attend Mondays to Thursdays enjoying a range of activities that support their learning in the broadest sense and which always have the goal of supporting emotional and physical wellbeing during this crisis. We will soon be offering time on Friday for young people to be supported with transitions.



We are lucky to have an amazing woodland area within the office grounds in addition to our other indoor and outdoor facilities so as well as a host of creative activities, children are able to explore nature and carefully managed adventurous activities during their time at The Wee Hub.



Barnardo's Scotland works closely with the local authority to jointly identify those children and young people most likely to benefit from this support and to ensure that our Hub complements school-based provision so that those who most need support can get what they need.

We recognise the plans to move towards a blended model of education as pupils eventually return to school and it is our intention to continue operating The Wee Hub as long as it is required. We understand that school holidays can be a challenging time for families and the current situation is no different so The Hub at Oxfgangs will continue to operate through the upcoming summer holiday period.

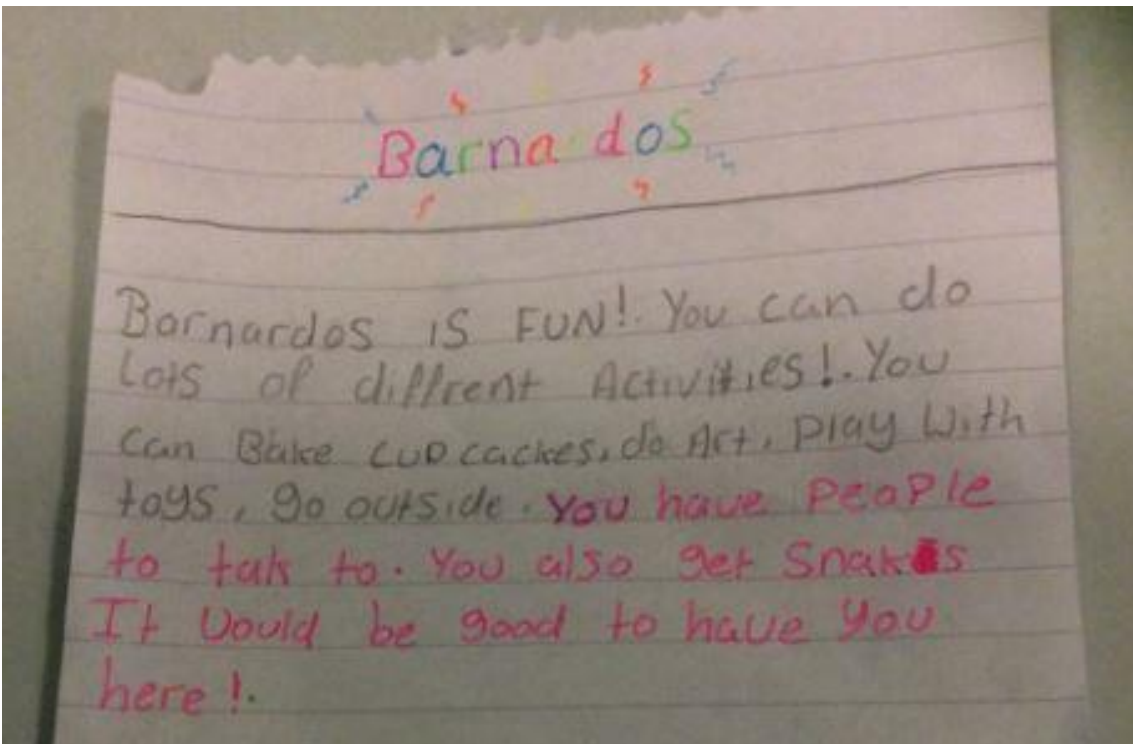


The close collaborative work with the local authority's Additional Support for Learning team around our Hub has meant that provision has continued to evolve further. We are delighted to now have a team from Forest School, offering opportunities to achieve and develop confidence and self-esteem through hands-on learning experiences in a woodland or natural environment with trees, taking place in the grounds at Oxfgangs which we aim to continue long after Covid-19 becomes a memory.

Case study

Our commitment to supporting those children and young people in most need at this unique time means we are also looking beyond our existing allocated caseload. Our local authority partners have developed a Covid-19 specific referral route that is held by social work and education leads in the city and they can identify if a child is in need of a place at The Wee Hub. The lead manager at the hub was contacted regarding concerns over a family and how difficult things were becoming in the house. The issues centred around one of the children in particular and their struggle to cope with lockdown and the absence of routine, the family were at risk of breaking lockdown protocols and had become reliant on the support of an elderly relative.

We invited the mum and her child to the Wee Hub to have a look around, after completing our risk assessment and preparing the project worker who would be supporting the young person, we began providing 1:1 support for two hours twice a week at the Hub whilst maintaining all Covid-19 protocols. This has been a huge help to the family as a whole. The young person gets out of the house, gets a little bit of routine back and has a really positive time plus the family get a sense that they are being supported.



Early feedback from Barnardo's Scotland staff working within the Hub at Home has been really positive:

"The positive impact on families has been noticeable- from parents who have been really struggling and finding lockdown very challenging- we are now seeing parents who are able to enjoy the positives again- admiring their child's creations, enjoying outdoor space and saying how grateful they are for some respite"

"The hub has been a challenge to set up with health and safety being a priority, however the preparation has paid off and the hub is working really well. This has included meticulous preparation, ensuring the children attending were in critical need and that activities planned suited age and stage."

"The co-working aspect of the hub and linking with ASL and SW has been highly successful in helping to meet the needs of the young people attending. Children who are not yet ready to access the hub have been out on community walks instead and some children are having support in their own gardens- this has gone well to date and allows us to see children face to face whilst maintaining social distancing and adhering to government guidelines.

"Staff had obvious worries about resuming face-to-face work but with the safety aspects in place it has given us all confidence to do the role safely and professionally."

"The young people have been able to give daily feedback and this has always been positive. They have mentioned how much they are enjoying the activities, how calm it is and that there are adults to speak to who they know and trust. Young people who are by nature very reserved now feel able to chat to others and offer their own opinion."

Quote from a parent getting support through the hub at Oxfgangs:

"My little girl has additional needs and couldn't attend the hub schools offered due to social distancing.

"As a key worker and single mum I was really struggling to balance both. My job also provides my only respite; I didn't want to have to give it up.

"My daughter suffers from bad separation anxiety, so seven weeks isolation together wasn't helping her. Barnardo's Scotland came along as an option and it has honestly changed so much in a very short time.

"The staff were welcoming and friendly, so much so that she seemed to forget I was there! The facilities and atmosphere there are fantastic. Great fun, lots to do but lovely and tranquil at the same time. Lots of outdoor space and staff available always to help her feel safe.

"I feel happy knowing I can leave her there enjoying herself while I go to work and have a bit of a break from being mum too."

Blog- a humble worker writes

As the mechanic's sign has it- you can have it quick, cheap or quality. Pick two!

My usual work takes me all over Edinburgh working with families in their home, visiting schools and supporting young people to access activities. Children are referred to us for a variety of reasons, such as concerns around behaviour, anxiety and trauma. I'll usually work with a family for a year using a variety of approaches to try to effect positive and sustainable change for the young person. Not being able to meet with families has been challenging and as a team we have tried to use what resources we have.

So I'm keeping in contact with my families through telephoning and occasionally video calling the young people. I'm trying to strike a balance between letting them know that I'm still here but not overwhelming them.

As a team we've come together to provide resources for families. Sometimes these are educational or fun activities, other times we have provided food parcels and supported them to access grants.

Recently we have started a mini-hub based at our head office where we can provide face-to-face support for a couple of hours to the most vulnerable young people. Again we've tried to balance this much needed support with keeping everyone as safe as possible.

What I have learnt over the last month is that although we live in very uncertain times that the most important resource is the team. Having people with a variety of skillsets means we can meet a lot of the challenges that come our way as long as we remain flexible and determined to keep the child at the centre of everything we do.

Simon Robinson, Barnardo's Scotland