

THIS IS  
**BRENT CYP**  
THIS IS HOW WE GROW



**Brent**



## Foreword

I am pleased to introduce our Ways of Working entitled "This is Brent CYP. This is How we Grow". Our new Ways of Working was developed to integrate our working across CYP.

We now have agreed values and behaviours. I expect to see these in our interactions with each other, our partner agencies and most importantly, with children and families in Brent.

You'll see that our ways of working builds upon our previous practice framework. This document forms the foundation of our ways of working and grounds interactions with children and families. I'm very pleased to see a formal introduction of Anti-Racist Practice into our ways of working – this is our earth that nourishes our values and behaviours.



I look forward to working with you to embed our Brent CYP Ways of Working.

**Nigel Chapman, Corporate Director**

Brent is an extremely diverse community with varying needs and an abundance of strengths, resilience, and creativity. Our ways of working have been co-created with all services in Brent CYP which is representative of the diversity of our community and depicted by our multi-fruit tree.

"This is Brent CYP. This is How we Grow". It gives us a framework to strive for equity, consistency, and positive outcomes, whilst encouraging us to acknowledge the lived experiences of those we support.

Let's continue to grow together for the benefit of Brent's families.



**Palvinder Kudhail,  
Director of Early Help  
and Social Care**



**Shirley Parks,  
Director, Education,  
Partnerships and Strategy**

# Brent CYP ways of working:

## This is Brent CYP. This is how we grow

**Brent is one of the most diverse local authorities in the UK, with needs of families that change over time. We need to respond and adapt whilst being grounded, so that the people we help experience a consistently good level of service.**

**Our ways of working are inclusive to all Brent children and young people and are represented by a multi-fruit tree.**

The **trunk** represents our values. Our values are what we stand for and are our commitments to the people we serve:



**Contribution to society:** Making a positive difference

**Integrity:** Honesty, transparency, accountability and commitment

**Creativity:** Innovation, thinking outside the box, individualised service and co-creation

**Achievement:** Impact, aspirations, success for those we serve and ourselves

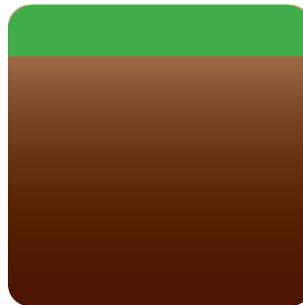
Our **branches** are how we work with the people we serve and with each other. In all our interactions we are curious, courageous and kind.



**Curious** – We do not make assumptions and ask questions to ensure we have a clear and transparent understanding. When someone is frustrated, confused or upset, we ask open questions to understand their lived experience.

**Courageous** – We are able to have difficult conversations and are brave in how we work with each other and our partner agencies. We challenge when people do not get what they need to thrive.

**Kind** – We are generous, helpful, and think of other people’s feelings. We appreciate and value different views. We know that individuals and families are the experts in their own lives and respect their journey.



The **earth** symbolises that we are an anti-racist organisation. This is what nourishes how we work with each other and with our service users. Being anti-racist grounds our actions in an inclusive and intersectional setting.

Practitioners working directly with children and families need to be **rooted** in purpose, principles and approaches that help practice to thrive. Our roots include:



- »» Systemic practice
- »» Trauma-informed practice
- »» Signs of Safety
- »» Contextual safeguarding
- »» Restorative practice.

The **fruits** are the outcomes achieved by the people we serve and ourselves. They are represented by different fruits, demonstrating the diversity of Brent and that outcomes are different for everyone.



Each element of our tree has chapters to read and apply to our day-to-day work.



# Our Trunk:

## A closer look at our **values**

Our values are what we stand for and are our commitments to the people we serve. Our values keep us standing tall.

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### **Making a contribution to society**

Making a contribution to society can be defined as **“helping to make the lives of others better”**

In Brent CYP this means that **“the services we provide positively impact on the resilience of our families and our community”**. Both today and in the future, Brent CYP wants to build and sustain a legacy of positive change.

The Brent school admissions team are proud that they have been continuously supporting newly arrived families from abroad and been able to support them to secure a school place.

**The Safeguarding and Quality Assurance** service keep children at the centre of all decision-making processes and encourage participation of children and young people whenever possible.

The **LAC and Permanency Service** keep families together wherever possible, finding high-quality

placements when not and aiming for reunification when safe to do so.

**Family Wellbeing Centres** contribute towards their community and support with making family life better by addressing social isolation, mental health concerns and cost of living pressures. They also help first-time parents with support in times of family crisis.

**The Accelerated Support Team** supports children and their families to make the local community safer and help family members develop better emotional regulation skills and increase their overall well-being.

### **Integrity**

Integrity can be defined as “the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles.” Integrity in Brent CYP is **“the quality of being honest, and having strong moral principles”**.

**What does integrity mean to us? Administrators** see integrity as being willing, kind, adaptable understanding and helpful.

In **children's social care**, integrity is seen as respect of cultural differences, recognition of power balances, respect and displaying empathy.

Members of the **SENDIAS** team act with integrity when they are professional with clients, are committed and follow through, are transparent and honest about challenges and manage realistic expectations.

Members of the **Youth Justice Service** demonstrate their integrity when they show up for the people they service and are their advocate.

The **School Effectiveness Team** shows integrity by thoroughly planning all visits to schools and encouraging and supporting diversity in governing boards.

## Creativity

Creativity can be defined as **“the tendency to generate or recognise ideas, alternatives, or possibilities that may be useful in solving problems and communicating with others.”**

In Brent CYP this means

**“providing the best possible service with the resources available”**

### **What does creativity mean to us?**

An example from **BOAT** (Brent Outreach Autism Team) is using creativity as improving visual access to learning in schools.

The **Performance Team** has shown their creativity by producing attractive Power BI dashboards, highlighting service needs, and celebrating good performance in service areas.

**Forward Planning and Performance** show creativity by adapting service delivery to staffing capacity, balancing school, and Local Authority requirements, creating new teams to support all of our work.

**Localities service** practitioners use their resources in creative ways – from finding ways to build relationships with families, to working with the voluntary sector to bring in more value and meet families' needs.

## Achievement

Achievement can be defined as **“success in doing something good, usually by working hard”**

In CYP this means a **“commitment to supporting children and families succeed and celebrating our individual and collective accomplishments.”**

## What does achievement mean to us?

The Inclusion Support Team supports pupils to achieve their best by removing barriers and supporting their progress through high quality teaching and learning.

In **children's social care**, achievements are made through collective working within teams and with multi-agency partners to improve outcomes for families, ensuring positive modelling to make a difference. Another achievement is developing a permanent workforce to reduce the times children and their families have to tell their stories, making service provision consistent.

## The Brent Deaf and Hearing Support Service

sees achievement through considering the impact of their work. This includes academic and social attainment, personal growth, and mental well-being of their clients.

**RESPECT**

**BELIEF**

**EMPATHETIC**

**ENAGAGING**

**UNDERSTANDING**

**HONESTY**

**PROBLEM SOLVING**

**TEAM WORK**

**OPTIMISTIC**

**HARD WORKING**

**CARING**

# Our Branches:

## A closer look at our **behaviours**

Our branches are how we work with the people we serve and with each other.

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### **Curious**

We do not make assumptions. We ask questions to ensure we have a clear and transparent understanding. When someone is frustrated, confused, or upset, we ask open questions to understand their lived experience.

#### **What are the ways we show curiosity?**

- » Taking critical approach to things, questioning our stance, examining information and not making assumptions
- » Seeking to learn and understand people's experiences and what they need
- » Reflecting on how curiosity helps us to learn and grow
- » Being curious links to being courageous. Your curiosity can lead to speaking up about something and making changes.

### **Courageous**

We are able to have difficult conversations and are brave in how we work with each other and our partner agencies.

We challenge when people do not get what they need to thrive.

#### **How do we show our courage?**

- » We have meaningful dialogue to affect change, shift perspective, be heard and acknowledged and allow others to be heard
- » We speak up about critical issues and hold ourselves and others accountable
- » We say what needs to change in a relationship, a group, a team, or a system
- » We push to change policy to better serve our community and promote social justice and human rights
- » In order to be effective in our courageousness, we also need to remain kind.

## Kind

We are generous, helpful, and think how honest messages may be difficult to receive for others.

We appreciate and value different views. We know that individuals and families are the experts in their own lives and respect their journey.

### **What does kindness mean in our work?**

- » Starting from a position of kindness creates space to listen, have empathy and include children and families in decision-making
- » Increasing our sense of connection to others and helps to create a lasting impression
- » Remaining mindful of the power and privilege we hold in relation to the community we serve
- » Understanding and valuing different perspectives and experiences
- » Remembering the importance of prioritising staff well-being so we all feel resilient and able to be kind

# Our Earth:

a closer look at anti-racist **practice**

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## **Anti-racist practice**

The earth symbolises that we are an anti-racist organisation. This is what sustains how we work with each other and with our service users. Being anti-racist grounds our actions in an inclusive and intersectional setting.

Anti-racist practice actively challenges and dismantles systemic racism while promoting equality, social justice, and cultural sensitivity. Brent CYP commits to anti-racist practice. This includes with children and families with whom we work and within our workplace. Being anti-racist is another way we live out our values and behaviours.

# How anti-racist practice relates to **our behaviours**

## **To be Courageous**

- » To challenge racism in all forms - you do not need to be an expert on racism to challenge it
- » Allyship – active support for the rights of a minority or marginalised group without being member of it .

## **To be Curious**

- » Be willing to be vulnerable, to face uncomfortable truths about ourselves and others
- » To identify our biases, learn about the experiences of those from marginalised/minoritised ethnic and racial backgrounds and unlearn what is harmful

## **To be Kind**

- » We are kind to each other by recognising that racism is a form of trauma, both to the marginalised and potentially for those who have consciously or subconsciously perpetuated racism



## **We are self-reflective and self-aware**

All staff understand the importance of ongoing self-reflection to examine our own biases, prejudices, and privileges. Recognising personal bias is crucial in order to provide fair support to children and families from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds.

### **Examples in action:**

- » The Fostering and Kinship team have culturally reflective supervision related to relationships between carers and children and young people, thinking carefully about areas of similarities and difference.
- » Educational psychologists carefully consider trends in ethnicity of children and young people referred to them and challenge if there are unjust exclusion practices in schools.
- » For practitioners, we expect that this reflection is captured in every form of supervision across CYP.

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## **We aim for cultural competence and are humble**

We strive to develop cultural competence, which involves understanding and respecting different cultures, traditions, and belief systems. It is important to approach families and other professionals with humility, acknowledging that they are experts in their own lives. In Brent CYP we have the benefit of a number of culturally diverse groups that meet on a regular basis, hold events, forums for discussions and more. These groups are an extraordinary resource for CYP staff to increase their cultural competence and engage with our extremely diverse population.

### **Examples in action:**

- » Senior leaders are proactive in encouraging the progression of staff from the global majority, who represent the diverse community we serve, into more senior roles in the local authority. We are building an inclusive borough in Brent that ensures all children can flourish, whatever their background, needs or circumstances. This includes access to an inclusive, world class and inspiring education that empowers them to be the absolute best they can be.

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## We are anti-oppressive

We adopt an anti-oppressive framework that challenges power imbalances and addresses intersecting forms of discrimination, including racism. This framework ensures that practice and our service provision is guided by principles of equality and justice, advocating for the rights and well-being of all individuals and communities.

### Examples in action:

- » In Localities, there is active reflection to ensure that plans for children are not influenced by any biases that may be held by the professional network. For example, by giving the appropriate consideration to fathers and paternal extended families and for families who may not live in the UK.

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## We critically analyse policies and procedures

We critically examine policies, procedures, and practices within our own organisation to identify any discriminatory practices or barriers that perpetuate racism. This analysis includes a focus on systemic issues such as institutional racism and structural inequalities. In Brent CYP we understand that we are on a journey and although we are confident in our commitment to anti-racism, we acknowledge that we may not always get it right. Therefore, we encourage our workforce to escalate areas where discrimination has the potential to go unchecked.

### Examples in action:

- » In Forward Planning, Performance and Partnerships they clarify the approach of placement providers in planning meetings by questioning whether they have an anti-racist policy, probing about implementation of policy and auditing policies. The service is actively becoming more self-aware about the way in which organisational policies can facilitate discrimination.
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## We engage with the community

We use every opportunity to actively engage with the communities we serve, including building relationships with community leaders, cultural organisations and advocacy groups. This collaboration helps to understand the specific needs and challenges faced by marginalised communities and provides opportunities to work together towards positive change.

### Examples in action:

- » Early Help, Family Wellbeing Centres are creative in direct work with children and young people and their families, ensuring that it is pitched to their level of understanding, particularly with those who have English as a second language and ensuring that appropriate support is available to children with additional needs.

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## We address racial disparities and disproportionality

We are vigilant in identifying and addressing racial disparities in outcomes and service provision. This includes recognising and challenging biases that may lead to disproportionate levels of intervention or unequal access to resources for different racial and ethnic groups.

### Examples in action:

- » The Performance Teams analyse available data to see where and why disparities exist so practices can be challenged and changed.
- » The School Effectiveness Service is working with school leaders to develop anti-racist practice in schools and support them to address disproportionality in educational outcomes.

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## We continue to learn and develop

We engage in ongoing training and professional development focused on anti-racist practice. This may include workshops, conferences, or courses that promote cultural competence, understanding of racism, and effective strategies for working with diverse populations.

### Examples in action:

- » The Learning and Development Team ensure that all training offered amplifies the voices of the global majority and those who are marginalised.

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## **We advocate for policy change**

We advocate for policy changes at a wider level to address systemic racism. This can involve working with policymakers, participating in campaigns, and supporting legislative measures that promote racial equity and social justice. Senior leaders commit to consulting with the workforce when either responding to or advocating for policy change.

### **Examples in action:**

- » The Inclusion Service and Virtual School are advocates for children in schools, and feedback trends of disproportionality both internally and to governors when necessary and appropriate.

We support the Council's refreshed commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion by contributing to corporate initiatives, providing our insights to affect change at a whole-Council level.

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## **We collaborate with colleagues and partner agencies**

We collaborate with partner agencies to promote an anti-racist practice environment within their organisations. This can include participating in discussions, sharing resources, and collectively challenging discriminatory practices and attitudes.

### **Examples in action**

- » LAC and Permanency are building on the work of the partnership with Brent Care Journeys, privileging the voices of care experienced children and young people. Anti-racist practice permeates through all of the ways they support and protect the community alongside partner agencies.

# Our ROOTS:

Our roots can be applied to anyone working directly with children and young people and align with the Children's Social Care National Framework.

## **The Children's Social Care National Framework**

The Children's Social Care National Framework is guidance for those who work in children's social care. This framework outlines the national purpose and principles of children's social care.

### **The purpose of children's social care**

Children's social care exists to support children, young people and families, to protect them by intervening decisively when they are at risk of harm and to provide care for those who need it so that they grow up and thrive with safety, stability and love.

## **The principles of children's social care**

- » Children's welfare is paramount.
- » Children's wishes and feelings are sought, heard, and responded to.
- » Children's social care works in partnership with whole families.
- » Children are raised by their families, with their family networks, or in family environments wherever possible.
- » We work with other agencies to effectively identify and meet the needs of children, young people, and families.
- » We consider the economic and social circumstances which may impact children, young people and families.

For more information:

**Children's social care: national framework - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))**

## **A closer look at the approaches that support our practice**

Our approaches are the way we put our values, behaviours, purpose and principles into practice with children and families.

Our main approach in Brent CYP is systemic, with the complementary approaches of Signs of Safety, Restorative Practice, Trauma-Informed Practice and Contextual Safeguarding. Each approach describes a way of working that guides how we behave as professionals and how children and families experience our interactions with them.

They are not processes to follow or tools in their own right, although from these approaches come lots of tools and techniques to support us in our work.

The approaches we use all have similar values and evidence base, and are centred around common ideas which are:

- » **Valuing and building relationships**
- » **Collaborative – doing ‘with’ not ‘to’, and seeing families as experts in their own lives**
- » **Strengths-based - using the existing skills and abilities of families**
- » **Importance of working with the whole family, including using the family network to build capacity and resilience**
- » **The importance of the child’s voice**
- » **Using reflective questions to be collaborative, holistic and balanced.**

## Systemic Practice

Systemic practice is a way of acting, thinking and seeing the world, which focuses on relationships and recognises that individuals are always part of their social contexts. When we are thinking systemically we are trying to make sense of the world through relationships, focusing on the whole family system and their networks rather than individuals. Through a systemic approach we can achieve change for families by exploring how they interact in relation to others and how their relationship patterns impact on children.

Systemic practice helps us think about and value different viewpoints and generates multiple hypotheses about what might be happening in a family. It is an important approach for assessment (including assessment of risk). By helping us consider possibilities it means we can think about potential harm we might not have otherwise thought about and also help us challenge our assumptions about what's happening for a family. It also helps to introduce change into a system, creating new explanations and potential solutions for the problems facing families.

### Key characteristics of systemic practice can be summarised as:

- » Relational: seeing dynamics as relational and interpersonal
- » Context: making sense of families by understanding the many contexts which influence them
- » Patterns: focus on interactions between people and how meaning is created from these
- » Circularity: move away from locating problems in individuals and see how things are connected
- » Mutual influence: recognising everyone functions through relationships of mutual influence

In Brent, systemic practice supports relationship building, communication, reflection and analysis of the systems families live within including within their racial context. This in turn supports us in developing our interventions and enhances our direct work with children and families.

## Systemic Practice in Practice

Maud is 8 years old and became angry with her mum because mum is not responding to her. Maud's mum became frightened of her daughter because she has had a previous experience of violence. When Maud becomes angry, mum becomes scared and she withdraws from Maud.

This makes Maud even angrier – the practitioner can see how a cyclical pattern is emerging. The practitioner also sees that when Maud gets angry, mum gets scared and withdraws which makes Maud even angrier so the two behaviours are relational, interconnected and mutually influencing each other. The practitioner also notices that when Maud and her mum make cakes together or take the dog for a walk or do something fun they get on great together. There are fewer times when Maud is angry so it seems to the practitioner that there is a context in which Maud gets angry and it's not all the time every day.

The practitioner spends time with Maud's mum thinking about when Maud has got angry but mum didn't withdraw and asked questions like:

- » **“Did you notice that you weren't frightened?”**
- » **What was different about that time?**
- » **What times can you tell me about when you expected to feel frightened by her anger, but for some reason you just didn't?”**

By exploring the situation with Maud's mum, both the practitioner and mum began to recognise when and where feelings of fear and withdrawal would happen, and see the skills mum used to manage her feelings of fear so that Maud's mum could then use them to make a change and help Maud manage feeling angry.



## Trauma-Informed Practice

Trauma happens as a result of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) such as violence or abuse, neglect, loss, disaster, war and other emotionally harmful experiences as well as race-based trauma.

Trauma-informed practice means we use our knowledge and understanding about trauma to guide what we do with traumatised children, young people or adults. We know in using a trauma-informed approach that children exposed to traumatic and stressful experiences during childhood often grow up with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. These can endure into adulthood and may result in enduring health complications. Trauma-informed practice means understanding, recognising, and responding to the effects of all types of trauma. In our practice, taking a trauma-informed approach means we think about and support safety, we are trustworthy and transparent, we collaborate and have empathy, we look for ways to empower, support people's voices and highlight the choices they have.

We know that some of the children and young people that we work with are likely to have experienced trauma but not all children who have bad experiences will be traumatised. Every one of us is unique and our responses to the same experiences will differ. We know however, that trauma can affect brain development.

Many traumatised children and young people:

- » are working at an earlier developmental level than their chronological age
- » may struggle to develop regulatory skills needed for learning and social relationships
- » can react powerfully to sensory triggers related to their trauma by becoming hyper aroused or dissociating
- » may experience additional distress if adults involved with them are unable to manage their own emotions.

Young people who experience contextual harm, also experience hyper vigilance and are more vulnerable to coercion, harmful sexual behaviours substance misuse and more.

In trauma-informed practice, effective help means:

- » intervention that takes account of our knowledge of trauma
- » support is at the right developmental level
- » help and support is relational – that is, it's interactive and social and is focused on relationships.

## Trauma Informed Practice in Practice

Perfect is a 10 year old Ghanaian-British girl who lived with her mum and step-father before entering care. She went to live with her foster carer and she would sit by herself and not speak with anyone.

Perfect was disengaged from day-to-day life and very anxious about people she did not know.

Perfect's social worker did not think about Perfect's behaviour on its own but looked at her behaviour as an expression of a response to trauma. Over time, and supported by having individual counselling, Perfect was able to communicate that she had been sexually abused by her step-father. Perfect's social worker knew that Perfect's care needed to focus on physical, psychological and emotional safety as well as helping her have experiences of being in control and feeling empowered.

Working in a trauma-informed way meant Perfect's social worker also knew about traumatic stress where behaviours and responses of the children and young people are ways of coping with past traumatic experiences.

With Perfect's foster carer, her social worker thought about ways to build in routines and experiences throughout her day that were consistent and predictable. This meant giving Perfect time, space, and choices, and helping her see ahead of time what was coming up in her week through a calendar in her room and a timetable on the fridge that she could check whenever she needed to.

Along with Perfect's foster carer and Perfect, her social worker found activities that she could do together with her foster carer to build their relationship and trust, like cooking, and a 20-minute yoga lesson online that Perfect enjoyed.

Every day for 20 minutes she would practice yoga with her foster carer. The concentration on breathing helped create some fun and trust between them but also helped Perfect learn to tune in to her body a bit more and control her body's reaction over time.



## Restorative Practice

Restorative practice brings those harmed by conflict and those responsible for the harm together in communication, enabling everyone affected by a particular incident to play a part in repairing the harm and finding a positive way forward.

'The fundamental premise in Restorative Practice is that people are happier; more cooperative and more likely to make positive changes when those in positions of authority do things with them rather than to them or for them.' (Wachtel 2005). This involves providing people with the right support and encouragement to enable them to reach their goals (high support), and providing positive challenge and holding people to account in a meaningful and constructive way (high challenge). It is about inspiring people and communities to find solutions to their own problems and to shape their own futures. It is not suggesting a resolution or telling people what they should do. There are six principles that together form the basis of restorative practice:

- » Restoration – address and repair harm.
- » Voluntarism – participation is voluntary and based on informed choice.

- » Neutrality – restorative processes are fair and unbiased towards participants.
- » Safety – processes and practice aim to ensure the safety of all participants and create a safe space for the expression of feelings and views about harm that has been caused.
- » Accessibility – restorative processes are non- discriminatory and available to all those affected by conflict and harm.
- » Respect - Restorative practice can be used anywhere to build and restore relationships by enabling people to communicate effectively and positively, and restorative approaches can also be used within the workplace to build strong, positive relationships. Staff meetings, for example, can be restorative, focused on building relationships and based around a foundation of mutual respect.

In Brent, restorative practice is being well established in our Youth Justice Service. They have helped to embed this approach in front line practice. Restorative Practice is used to prevent school exclusions, support children to remain with their families when it is safe to do so and prevent placement breakdowns when children and young people become looked after.

## Restorative Practice in Practice

Michael is a white British 14 year old who got into trouble following a fight he had outside school with Ishmael, a 14 year old Asian British boy. The fight also involved racist abuse and both boys' friendship networks got involved. Michael's social worker and a youth worker helped set up direct and indirect peer mediation within and between the groups. Michael was supported to write a restorative justice letter by his social worker. This was a letter which was written to respond to Ishmael's questions and requests. Michael's social worker helped Michael think about how it would feel to be on the receiving end of his actions and what Michael would have said and done if someone had punched him and racially abused him. Michael was encouraged to write about his reflections so these could be shared with Ishmael.

Eventually the groups came together along with some people who were important to them in a healing circle led by the youth worker. The circle thought about the harm caused and what everyone needed as well as what people thought their responsibilities were to each other.



## Signs of Safety

Signs of Safety (SoS) is an approach based on systemic ideas, tools and techniques which involves developing collaborative and constructive working relationships with children and families, and amongst professionals. It places emphasis on creating honest and respectful relationships with families. This means practitioners have to have difficult conversations with families in a compassionate and respectful way. It is also strength-based, aiming to nurture strengths within a family, recognising that situations can change and families are essential to that change. It helps support families to find their own solutions to the issues they face. It involves practitioners being aspirational for families and treating every encounter as an opportunity for change. A focus on safety is maintained involving safety planning with children, family networks and professional networks.

Signs of Safety encourages practitioners to think critically, which means reflecting on what has worked and not worked, remaining open-minded, and being prepared to admit they may have it wrong. Signs of Safety is therefore a questioning not an expert approach, and focuses on using thought provoking and reflective 'powerful' questions as tools for intervention. It requires respectful

professional curiosity coupled with skilful and respectful use of authority.

The Comprehensive Risk Assessment and Signs of Safety Assessment and Planning tools are designed to be the map for using a SoS approach.

Underpinning these are a variety of tools and practitioners can be creative in adapting these tools to the child's situation. These include:

The three columns and scaling question:

- » What are we worried about? (past harm, future danger, complicating factors)
- » What's working well? (existing strengths and safety)
- » What needs to happen (future safety goals and next steps)
- » Scaling question (where are we on scale of 0 to 10 where 10 means that there is enough safety to close the case).

In Brent, Signs of Safety is used across all areas of CYP and with our partners, including as a key tool for Early Help Assessments, through to risk management with children in need of protection. Our revised ways of working continues to use Signs of Safety as a tool however we view Signs of Safety as complementary to our other approaches.

## Signs of Safety in Practice

A shop worker reported that 2 year old Heidi had been hit by her mum, Kathy, for having an accident on the floor of the supermarket. The shop worker told the Social Worker, Olu, that Kathy and her daughter regularly went to this supermarket and the shop worker thought that there was very little positive or warm interaction between them. On the day that the shop worker decided to call, she had seen Heidi wandering around the supermarket with no shoes or socks on and dressed in a grubby t-shirt that was far too big for her. Kathy also looked very stressed and had a bruise on her face.

In an initial home visit to see Kathy and Heidi, Olu explained the reported worries. Based on their discussion, they worked together to develop a danger statement that allowed Kathy to fully understand the worries in clear language. Olu encouraged Kathy to talk about what she wanted for herself and for Heidi in their lives. One of the things Kathy really wanted was to be able to go to the supermarket and for people to not

report her to Brent CYP. Olu invited Kathy to think about how she could care for Heidi so that everyone around her and Olu could see that Kathy was meeting her daughter's needs. Olu let Kathy know that if that happened this would prevent further reports, people would be less worried and Olu would not need to be involved any more. Olu was able to support Kathy to have a clearer understanding of what was happening in Kathy and Heidi's life and develop safety goals. Olu also took time to think with Kathy about the family's strengths and resources and exceptions to this problem. He asked her useful questions like 'you said earlier it hasn't always been like this. Could you tell me a bit about those other times?' and explored what was different about the times where Kathy felt on top of things and handled Heidi well. In these ways, Olu was creating a plan with Kathy to build safety and increase her own and Heidi's wellbeing.



## Contextual Safeguarding

Contextual safeguarding is an approach to child protection in adolescence that assesses, supports, and intervenes with:

- » peer relationships (friendship networks, social groups)
- » educational contexts (schools and colleges)
- » public contexts (the places where people hang out) where children and young people may be at risk of harm.

Contextual Safeguarding is about recognising that the different relationships that young people form in their neighbourhoods, schools and online can feature violence and abuse. Parents and carers can have little influence over these contexts, and young people's experiences of extra-familial abuse can undermine parent-child relationships.

Contextual Safeguarding is part of our child protection systems. This approach demonstrates how young people are vulnerable to abuse in lots of social contexts not just within the family. The implications for Brent are that practitioners will need to work

with individuals and professionals and agencies who have influence over and within contexts outside the family. This requires a whole Council response, working closely with other statutory agencies, schools, communities and the community and voluntary sector.

The Brent Contextual Safeguarding approach helps practitioners to recognise:

- » the different influences (small and large) that contexts have in shaping the behaviours of young people
- » the effect that settings outside of the family can have on the ability of parents and carers to be protective and
- » how best to boost and develop family relationships and networks to improve safety for young people beyond the family/agency.

This is Brent This is How we Grow is our eclectic, adaptive approach to keeping children and young people safe and well. All of our "roots" complements the assessment of Contextual Safeguarding through identifying risks for children and young people, in the family between peers and in a wider school and neighbourhood context.

## Contextual Safeguarding in Practice

**Sheetal is a 17-year-old female of Asian heritage. Her mother tried to put boundaries in place to stop Sheetal going missing, leading to an altercation where her mother was injured by Sheetal. Sheetal told her school she was homeless and she was accommodated.**

Whilst accommodated, Sheetal's missing episodes continued, and contextual safeguarding concerns were heightened. For example, having unexplained money, peer associations with known gang members, using social media to meet men, reduced school attendance, returning home under the influence of drugs/alcohol, increasing secretiveness and significant changes in emotional well-being.

The social worker and team manager worked together to understand the different contexts that influenced Sheetal's behaviour through peer mapping, location mapping,

and a vulnerable adolescent risk assessment. Interventions were put in place to help Sheetal understand child sexual exploitation alongside support for her mental health. There was intense information sharing and planning with her mother and multi-agency partners such as the Police, Prospects, the placement and other local authorities where her friends resided. This co-ordinated work disrupted some of the negative influences in her life and helped build safety.

The social worker was able to build her relationship with Sheetal to understand what is happening in her community (in school, locally and online) and was aware of the strong influence of peers and social media. In addition, the social worker was able to understand Sheetal's lived experience using a trauma informed approach and became a safe person for Sheetal to come to when needed.

Although Sheetal's mother was hesitant to have Sheetal back in the home, eventually re-unification was successful using restorative practice techniques. The journey continues but there is a solid foundation to achieve long term, sustainable change for both Sheetal and her mother.



# Our Fruit:



## A closer look at our **outcomes**

The fruits of our tree are the outcomes achieved by the people we serve and ourselves. They are represented by different fruits, demonstrating the diversity of Brent and that outcomes are different for each individual and family. Although individual outcomes vary, we have overarching outcomes that we all work together to achieve. These outcomes show the contribution we have made to children and families' lives

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### **Children and young people are happy, healthy and thrive**

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#### **Examples include:**

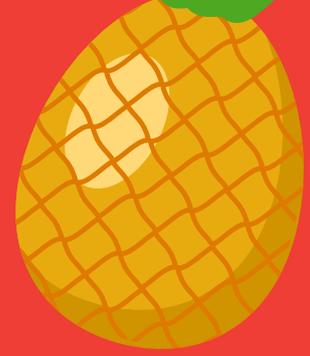
- » Young people are supported to recognise their unique skills, strengths and talents and feel able to try new things, be creative, and feel able to come up with solutions
- » We identify a young child's needs at the earliest stage and put effective support in place
- » Families are encouraged to access health and well-being services in their community

### **Children, young people and families have the opportunity to reach their full potential**

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#### **Examples include:**

- » A young person with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) is offered a permanent job after taking part in a supported internship scheme
- » Parents/caregivers become employed through support and access to childcare
- » Children and young people's voices are listened to, their voices are amplified and they contribute to service improvement



## **Children, young people and families stay together and get the help they need**

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### **Examples include:**

- » A child with a high needs support package remains at home to be cared for by their parents/care givers
- » A parent has a better understanding of what their child needs and can give their child what they need. Achieving routine and stability for a young person by helping to make home life be consistent, reliable, predictable and secure

## **Children and young people are supported by their family network**

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### **Examples include:**

- » Practitioners work with a family to identify those who they love and trust to support them to build a plan that keeps the family safe
- » Parents and the family network are supported to think about ways they can reduce the risk of harm
- » A family network is listened to and supported when they need to become more actively involved in a child's life now and into the future

## **Children and young people are safe in and outside of their homes**

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### **Examples include:**

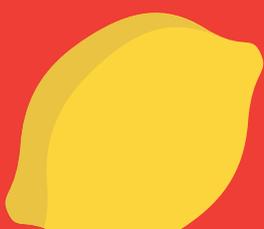
- » A young person on the "edge of care" remains at home and in school through partnership with the school, family, the family network, CAMHS and any other specialist support
- » A family demonstrates they have increased safety and reduced danger in their home following multi-agency support
- » A young person and their families are provided with resources to understand extra-familial harm and build safety

## **Children in care and care leavers have stable, loving homes.**

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### **Examples include:**

- » A child remains in their forever home in a safe way through providing emotional and practical support to a parent or care giver and their support network
- » A child needing a safe family thrives with their adoptive parents
- » A care leaver is supported to develop a lifelong network of people who show love and care as they move into adulthood



This is Brent CYP.  
This is how we grow.

Our ways of working are meant to be flexible, to guide us, inspire us, and develop with us as we grow. It is a commitment to a way of thinking, being and doing.

Through following the ways of working, we can make sure that we build relationships and work effectively with children and families and each other.

