How has COVID-19 impacted on disadvantaged young children and their families in Newham?

Dr Julian Grenier
Sheringham Nursery School & Children’s Centre
@juliangrenier
Newham

- Probably the most diverse area in Europe
- 78% of residents are from ethnic minority communities
- Covid-19: early on, the worst affected area in the UK
- Has more children in temporary accommodation than the whole of the North of England
Manor Park in Newham

- 22% Percentage of households experiencing fuel poverty (2017)
- 460 Children aged 0-18 in Out of Work Benefit Claimant households (2017)
- 21% Percentage of children living in low income families (2016)
Challenges and learning during Covid-19

• The Children’s Centre infrastructure together with other council systems has worked well to respond to urgent need

• As a Children’s Centre we are in touch regularly with about 150 ‘caseload’ families

• Many children spent long weeks not going out at all

• Some parents have experienced serious mental health crises e.g. being sectioned

• Many have experienced high levels of anxiety and distress
Unhelpful ways of talking about the early years
• What lessons have we learnt?
• How can we support disadvantaged young children to make up the lost ground?
Resilience

• Relationships
• Systems
• Respectful relationships to support families
• High quality early years education, with a focus on the prime areas
Some of the features of early years in Newham

- Best Start in Life Programme: 8 Children’s Centre (2 per quadrant) which still offer a range of universal and targeted services.
- All the Children’s Centres are based in schools and therefore have teacher-led Early Years Education and Childcare on-site.
- Nearly all Newham’s three and four-year olds are in teacher-led nursery classes or maintained nursery schools.
Some of the challenges faced in Newham:

- Children with SEND are falling further behind the average points score, year on year.
- Many families of children with SEND do not access community early years programmes.
- Take up of free places for eligible two-year olds has been rising, but it's still low.
- The private/voluntary nursery sector (PVI) has always been fragile – that’s even more true now.
Looking ahead – early years

• We’re learning a lot about using ICT to connect with families
• We can see how blending this with traditional approaches support our work in the future
• We have quite a lot of data about engagement levels but little yet about impact