

# Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee

## Update on the Children and Families change programme

30 September 2021

### 1. Recommendation

The committee are asked to note the progress and impact of the Children and Families change programme.

### 2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The Children and Families service are part of the Department for Education (DfE) national '*Strengthening Families, Protecting Children*' programme. This programme includes three different evidence-based models, and the service have adopted the '*Leeds Family Valued*' model. This model forms part of the overall Children and Families service change programme which has been designed to strengthen families and improve outcomes for children and young people. The service has received £12m of additional one-off funding to implement the change programme, £3.993m from the Department for Education (DfE) and the remainder provided by the Council's Children Transformation fund (sourced from two years of social care grants and residual Children and Families Transformation funds) agreed by the Council in February 2019 and 2020.
- 2.2 As part of the change programme the Children and Families service have successfully implemented a significant number of evidence-based initiatives to improve outcomes for children and families. These changes have included, new services, the expansion and improvement of services and additional training and resources to practitioners and partners
- 2.3 The change programme has been rigorously managed to ensure drift and delay has been minimised and outcomes are optimised. Challenges posed by the pandemic have impacted some aspects of delivery.
- 2.4 The programme is being externally and internally evaluated to monitor impact and inform future developments.
- 2.5 This report outlines progress, achievements, and next steps.

### **3. Children and Families change programme**

#### **3.1 Evidenced based approach**

3.1.1 The Children and Families change programme is made up of over 20 individual work areas.

3.1.2 The DFE '*Strengthening Families, Protecting Children programme*' (SFPC), includes three different evidence-based models. The Children and Families service have adopted the '*Leeds Family Valued*' model. The other models in the national programme are also reflected in some elements the Children and Families change programme, specifically the '*Hertfordshire family safeguarding*' model, which focuses on meeting the needs of children and adults (parents and carers). The Children and Families service approaches are known as

- Warwickshire Family Valued
- Warwickshire Family Safeguarding

3.1.3 The three models included in the SFPC programme were identified and evaluated via the national Children's Social Care Innovation Programme. Independent evaluation found that these models reflected 7 features of practice, which lead to positive outcomes. The 7 features are;

1. Using a clear, strengths-based practice framework
2. Systemic approaches
3. Enabling staff to do skilled direct work
4. Multi-disciplinary skills working together
5. Group discussion
6. High intensity and consistency of practitioner
7. Whole-family focus

These features are reflected across the whole of the Children and Families service programme.

#### **3.2 What do we want to achieve?**

3.2.1 The change programme supports the development of a child-centred, family focused and relational approach across the whole service. By working with children and families, partners and communities and strengthening and building relationships the service aims to improve outcomes for children.

3.2.2 The change programme is structured into the following projects, consisting of individual work areas:

- Early Help (including Community and Partners)
  - this includes improving and expanding early help support across communities to ensure the right support is provided at the right time.

- Child in Need and Child Protection
  - this includes expanding and making services more accessible with multi-agency teams supporting children and families to help improve mental and physical well-being
- Children in Care and Care Leavers
  - as corporate parents ensure that all children remain close to home, are well supported, appropriately educated and have strong identities
- Workforce, training and programme resources
  - building strong meaningful relationships with all children and families, partners, and communities, to ensure that Warwickshire is the best it can be for children and young people

### **3.3 Challenges**

3.3.1 The change programme was temporarily paused in March 2020 as the service responded to the Ofsted inspection and the pandemic. From June 2020 key areas were then prioritised, and planning and implementation was progressed.

3.3.2 The pandemic continued to pose additional challenges, specifically an increase in demand for statutory services. The recruitment of additional posts and training was moved online, and some services that did not traditionally lend themselves to online delivery such as the Caring Dad's programme, which required careful planning.

### **3.4 What progress has been made?**

3.4.1 As part of the change programme a number of services have been created, expanded and improved, additional training and resources to practitioners and partners has also been provided. A number of these work areas started to be delivered from September 2020 onwards and some have only recently been implemented, progress has been detailed below.

- Early Help (including Communities and Partners)
  - expanded the Parenting Programme to ensure
  - that the diverse needs of the community are catered for
  - developed a clear Early Help Network accessible to communities
  - recruited two headteacher coaches to support schools to safeguard children

- recruited additional Youth Workers to focus on reducing alcohol misuse and knife crime
- created a new Community Youth Services Fund, and allocated funding to community and voluntary organisations
- expanded the Different Futures project and provision of therapeutic support to those parents who have had multiple children removed from their care
- Children in need and child protection
  - expanded the Family Group Conferencing service
  - developed a peer to peer programme for parents to support other parents with behavior management and parenting concerns
  - created a new Domestic Abuse Perpetrators Programme (Caring Dads)
  - expanded and strengthened the Domestic Abuse Support team
  - creating a new adolescent support team working with children and young people who are potentially at risk of coming into care with focused intervention and prevention work
  - working together with partners to deliver joined up services, specifically working with Mental Health Parenting Practitioners , Substance Misuse Parenting Practitioners and a Child Exploitation Nurse
- Children in care and care leavers
  - increased the number of Life Story Workers and provided additional training to practitioners to ensure all children develop strong identities and understand their journey
  - increased support to Special Guardians and Connected Others to enable more children to stay within their families
  - developed and enhanced the Foster Carer recruitment campaign and expanded support provided to Foster Carers
  - increased support to care experienced young people to support them into education, employment and training.
- Workforce, training, and programme resources
  - continued to embed Restorative Practice across the Children and Families service to develop a culture of high challenge and high support, working alongside families rather than doing things to them, for them or just not doing them at all
  - investing in new areas of learning and development and creating a new Children and Families Academy, which is starting with the assessment and accreditation for social workers in their early career progression, this will gradually develop into the whole workforce Academy.
  - expanding support to social workers, with a specific focus on their health and wellbeing.

- Child Friendly Warwickshire - inspiring child friendly initiatives and practices throughout Warwickshire.
- providing opportunities for Care Leavers to become apprentices to support the change programme.

### **3.5 What difference has been made?**

3.5.1 All work areas have been planned to identify and capture management data to ensure the impact of these work areas is measured. This has included changes to recording and reporting processes, some of which are still taking place. Appendix A details some emerging benefits.

3.5.2 All changes have been communicated to staff and practitioners via a number of different methods, which have included live broadcasts, blogs, intranet guidance and team meetings to ensure practitioners are clear on the additional support available to children and families and themselves. As with all change programmes it takes time to embed new ways of working and promote cultural change across teams.

3.5.3 Senior leaders monitor progress and impact at programme and project board meetings. In addition, the service has an extensive quality assurance programme to monitor outcomes these include, monitoring performance data, case file reviews and audits, feedback from children and families, staff and partners.

3.5.3 This is a large and cultural change programme across Warwickshire and as such the service recognise it will take time to fully embed and for positive impacts to be realised. The service is seeing early positive signs of change, and these have been detailed below.

- positive feedback from headteachers and dedicated safeguarding leads
- evidence of practitioners applying relational approaches in work with Children and Families as evidence in case file audits
- more young people being supported by Youth Workers and achieving positive outcomes
- more support to community and voluntary youth organisations via nine community grants
- positive feedback from children and families
- timely support from expanded services, for example the Domestic Abuse team and Family Conferencing team
- strengthened relationships with families with an increase in the number of children living with Special Guardian and connected others

3.5.5 In addition, over the last 12 months (Sept 20 - Aug 21) and excluding Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children the number of children entering care has decreased slightly in comparison to the same period last year (by 4) and the number of children leaving care has increased in comparison to the same period last year (by 11). During this same period, the service has also seen less children escalating within social care, the number of children

escalating from a child in needs status to a Child Protection Plan has decreased by 11 in comparison to the same period last year and the number of children escalating from a child in need status to a child in care has decreased by 38 in comparison to the same period last year.

- 3.5.4 Partly due to the pandemic the service has seen an overall increase in the number of children in care, and the number of child in need and child protection plans as also seen by many other Local Authorities. The service is confident that the improvements and developments made will specifically target these areas, and once fully embedded will start to see a positive impact.

### **3.6 Evaluation of the programme**

- 3.6.1 The service will continue to monitor all the work areas. Key deliverables and measurable benefits have been identified for each work area. The work areas are being reviewed by regular project board and programme board meetings. The programme is also being externally evaluated by the What Works Centre and monitored and reviewed by Leeds City Council to ensure external scrutiny and challenge is applied. The evaluation of the work areas and the programme will also include savings and avoided costs.
- 3.6.2 A 'road map' has been completed to start to plan final evaluation of these areas six months before the funding has ended, this will inform future developments and if and how these work areas will be sustained.

## **4. Financial Implications**

- 4.1 The change programme funding is time limited. The investment equates to £12.008m of which £3.933m is funded by the Department for Education, the remainder funded, in the most part, by two years of earmarked Social Care Grant. The investment will be spent approximately over 3 financial years (2020/21, 2021/22, 2022/23 and partially into 2023/24).
- 4.2 The Period 5 2021/22 forecast spend is £5,645,176, this is part slippage and part under-spend of £670,417, the service estimates the majority of this underspend will be spent over the remainder of the programme. The slippage is due to some delays across the work programme linked to recruitment, responding to the pandemic and over estimation of some costs specifically the cost of programme management.
- 4.3 The service recognises there are challenges in relation to financial sustainability of the programme. There are a number of decisions and deadlines that do not neatly align, these being timescales for the Medium Term Financial Plan and the different end dates of fixed term posts linked to the individual work areas. Due to delays in recruitment and a focus on responding to the pandemic, individual work areas in the programme started at different times. Decisions on sustainability will be based on initial findings alongside the interim external evaluation report. The Children and Families Assistant Director and change programme team are preparing to establish a

sustainability plan for Corporate Board to consider, this plan will detail what the Children and Families service may look like in April 2023. The service aims to have an initial detailed plan by January 2022.

## 5. Environmental Implications

5.1 Environmental implications are limited

5.2 The use of virtual tools will be used to minimise travel as appropriate.

## Appendices

Appendix A: What difference has been made

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The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

Local members: none

Other members: none.