

Children & Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

11 April 2022

Response to Council Motion - Performance Update - Family Support Service and Children and Family Centres

Recommendation(s)

That the Children & Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee receives and comments upon the response of the Early Help Family Support Service detailing the comprehensive Family Support offer available for families from conception to 19 years (25 years with SEND) and of the Children and Family Centre service in response to the motion passed by Council in [16th March 2021].

1. Background

- 1.1. At the Council meeting of [16th March 2021] a motion was passed which asked that the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee keeps the Family Support Workers' service under review as part of its on-going performance monitoring. In response to that motion this Report sets out the current position with regard to family support activity and performance.
- 1.2. In 2019 the approach to Early Help was subject to review by the Council. This review resulted in the formation of 5 district/borough locality Early Help and Targeted Support Teams across Warwickshire include the Family Support Workers previously employed by the 4 Children's Centre providers and the Local Authority Early Help Team. The team are based within the localities at 5 WCC enabled Children and Family Centres with 3 further sites enabled to support the team to work in an agile manner across the area.
- 1.3. The Children and Family Centre Service is part of the County Council's "stepped approach" to delivering support and delivers a seamless, integrated service for families with children and young people. Two providers are commissioned to deliver the Children and Family Centre Service. These are Barnardo's and The Diocese of Coventry Multi-Academy Trust (St. Michael's). There are 14 core sites of which; Barnardo's operate 13 sites and St. Michael's operate 1 site. Both providers also utilise outreach locations to provide the service at a local level.
- 1.4. This report summarises:
 - Early Help and Targeted Support Staffing (including Family Support Workers)
 - Overview of service delivery
 - Increasing knowledge, capacity, and capability of the network
 - Continual service development
 - Current performance of the Children and Family Centres
 - Impact of Covid 19 on the service

- Actions taken to increase performance by the commissioned providers

2. Early Help Family Support Team

Early Help Family Support Team Staffing

- 2.1. In September 2019, 34 Family Support Workers (24 full time equivalent) and 3 Senior Family Support Workers (2.94 full time equivalent) transferred into Warwickshire County Council from the then Children's Centre providers. A further 3 full time Senior Family Support Workers were recruited shortly after.
- 2.2. To date the service has seen an increase in the permanent establishment of Family Support Workers to 25.6 full time equivalent (33 Family Support Workers, some with increased working hours and one current vacancy) supported by 6 full time Senior Family Support Workers. In response to the Covid 19 pandemic, an additional 6 full time Family Support Workers were recruited on fixed term contracts. This means there has been an increase in Family Support by 31.6% (including our COVID response) since 2019.
- 2.3. The Children's Transformation Programme also saw the introduction of 6 full time Parent Trainers to the service (Senior Family Support Workers), with 2 of the Parent Trainers working in Youth Justice Service. This has enabled the Warwickshire Children and Families Service to further develop the parenting offer and increase capacity in the Family Support Service as the Parent Trainers lead on parenting programme delivery.
- 2.4. The Family Support Team continue to be supported by 9.72 FTE Targeted Support Officers and 3 FTE Early Help Social Workers were introduced to the service in November 2020.
- 2.5. The staffing and development activity within the service was recognised in the 2021 Ofsted inspection which stated:

"Leaders have implemented a wide range of measures to ensure that children's needs are met well. They have a sound understanding of the quality of frontline practice and, despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, they have been tenacious in securing resources and ensuring that services continue to improve"

Services Delivered

- 2.6. Prior to 2019, the Children's Centre Family Support Service provided support to families with children from conception to 5 years only. However, it was considered that the services did not provide equity to all families across Warwickshire. This included supporting families who may also have been open to statutory intervention as part of a Child in Need, Child Protection Plan or Children in Care.
- 2.7. This was addressed and the Early Help Family Support Team now provide a consistent, equitable "stepped approach" to support for children, young people, and families from conception to 19 and up to 25 years for those with SEND. The Stepped Approach is the description of a graduated level of support which increases upon the level of complexity presented.

The team support families from universal services up to the point of formal social care intervention, whilst also providing de-escalation support for families stepping down from statutory intervention.

2.8. It is recognised that families do not come as a “one size fits all” and there has been significant investment in training for all Early Help Family Support Workers to ensure that standards are consistently high and staff are able to access a rich toolbox of knowledge and interventions to respond to the needs of all families appropriately.

2.9. To ensure families have access to the “right support at the right time”, Family Support Workers provide the following services:

2.9.1. Universal Help:

2.9.1.1. The Family Support Line is available across Warwickshire to offer immediate support, advice and guidance to parents, carers, and practitioners. The line operates Monday to Friday 9am – 4pm on 01926 412412. Appointments are available outside of these times by arrangement.

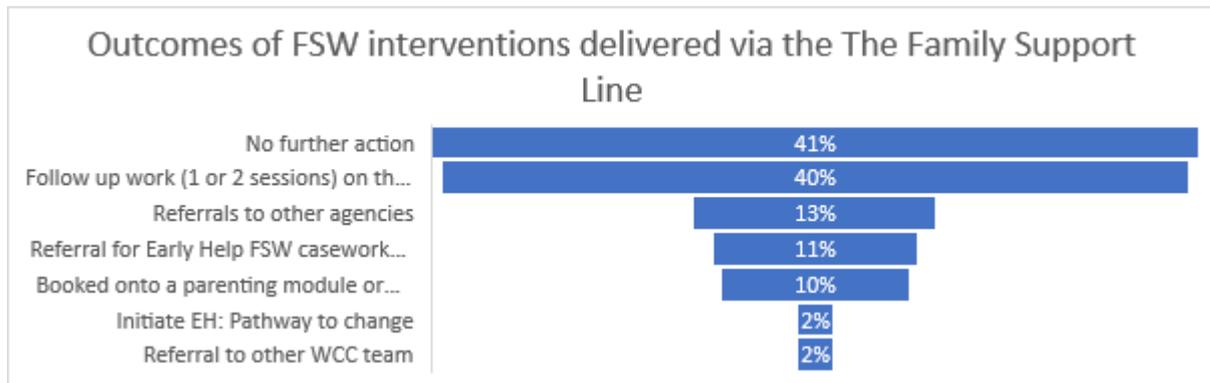
2.9.1.2. A Family Support Worker from each of the five locality districts/boroughs is allocated to support the Family Support Line daily enabling a locality specific response and to deliver immediate information, advice and guidance to parents, carers, and practitioners. This adds value to the intervention as practitioners know their localities well and connect families to local resources. Practitioners can also act upon parents/ carers behalf (with consent) to arrange a consultation, however, in most cases parents access the support themselves.

2.9.1.3. If further support is identified, a follow up call or face to face consultation is arranged by the Family Support Worker for a date and time convenient to the family or practitioner.

2.9.1.4. The Children & Families Front Door caller options also include an option to select the Family Support Line where support needs have been identified but are not of an immediate safeguarding nature. Calls can be effectively transferred between Children and Families services to enable families to access support from a Family support Workers as required. This enables families and practitioners access to immediate advice, guidance and support.

2.9.1.5. Since 1 April 2020, over 1700, consultations have been completed on the Family Support Line. 81% of those calls have been able to remedy the situation for a family without it escalating to require further support from an Early Help Pathway to Change (which stands at only 2%) or the Front Door (which is also 2%). The data below illustrates the outcomes from which multiple options have been chosen; i.e., a family accessed support that required them to attend a parenting module on top of the direct support offered on the Family Support Line which is also demonstrated no further action required. Follow up sessions pertains to the family support worker calling the family back for a diarised appointment to follow up on their previous concerns. The Family Support workers will also make referrals to other agencies as needed (such as the RISE

Dimensions tool). 96% of the work on the Family Support Line stays in the family support service and prevents escalation to specialist services.



2.9.2. Family Support Face to Face Consultations

2.9.2.1. Family Support Workers provide weekly Face to Face consultations for families. Parents can book a face-to-face consultation by calling the Family Support Line, with practitioner support to facilitate the coordination and attend the session as required. Additional follow up appointments and consultations can be coordinated as required. Prior to Covid 19 we were providing a face to face “Drop-in” with no need to book. However, due to the current Covid guidance in place in the Children & Families Centres, these are required to be “bookable appointments” only, with a view to delivering drops in again when COVID safety allows. More information about the Face-to-Face Consultation sessions can be found on our Children and Families – Children and Family Centre web pages.

2.9.2.2. The 2021 Ofsted’s inspection of Early Help was rigorous and thorough, with inspectors stating that:
“Children and families in Warwickshire benefit from a clearly defined and accessible Early Help offer, ensuring that they receive support services when needed.

2.9.3. Targeted Family Support Intervention

2.9.3.1. A link to our “Request for Family Support Work” form is available on our Children and Families webpages. Families can self-refer, and practitioners can also make a referral if they believe they are struggling with:

- Behaviour, routines, and boundaries
- Sleep, toileting, eating and related issues
- Social, personal, and emotional development
- Caring responsibilities
- Home conditions
- Parental isolation
- Parental conflict

- 2.9.3.2. From April 2020 to date, the Family Support Work team have worked with 2058 children in 1042 families. All referrals are triaged by Senior Family Support Workers and Team Managers to ensure a consistent and equitable application of the stepped approach. This ensures that the right support is offered at the right time and if required, a Family Support Worker is allocated. Intervention is provided in the most appropriate venue for the Child, Young Person or Family. This is often in the family home however, other support is provided via email, text, phone call, video call, and in a variety of venues which may include early years settings, schools or community venues.
- 2.9.3.3. Family Support Workers will be actively participating in Early Help: Pathway to Change plans as appropriate and take on the Lead Professional role, they also take an active role in supporting families who are transferring to and from a statutory intervention from the Children & Families Teams.
- 2.9.3.4. The average timescale for a Family Support intervention is 16 weeks from start to closure. The average caseload of a full time Family Support Worker is approximately 10 families or 22 children (dependent upon complexity). There are currently 313 families with 650 children open to a family support [7/3/2022] with active waiting list management in place. There are currently 49 children across Warwickshire awaiting allocation for direct 121 family support.
- 2.9.3.5. Outcomes for working with Family Support Workers are consistently high with approx. 69% of closures due to a positive outcome. All FSWs are trained in Restorative Practice and the principles of RP are the underpinning ethos of practice. If a family, working alongside their FSW, is able to resolve their families' difficulties with guidance, that is a positive outcome.
- 2.9.3.6. There will always be a proportion of families who start an intervention and determine that they do not wish to continue (14%), this is constantly monitored. In addition, there are occasions where courts will request that the interventions cease (3%) as another intervention might supersede it. Finally, there are 2% of families for whom the intervention with a FSW has not made a positive impact.

2.9.4. Parenting offer

- 2.9.4.1. We have developed a comprehensive parenting offer for families of children 0-19yrs or 25yrs with SEND, which is based upon the Stepped Approach. It includes an offer that starts with online programmes, Family Support line, 2-hour virtual workshops, short courses and a comprehensive range of parenting programmes offered both virtually and face to face by our parent trainer team. Our Family Support Workers also use this offer as part of their family support interventions. All workshops and courses are bookable on Eventbrite via our webpages or alternatively the parent trainer team can be contacted by phone or email to secure a place
- 2.9.4.2. Our multi-agency partners are aware of the offer and regularly share and signpost families to these services. Over the past year there has been 182

sessions delivered to over 600 parents, with Family Support Workers, Schools and Family Information Service being the top referrers. Out of 5, parents rated the courses 4.27 to have met their needs. An area of need that we are aware of and addressing is an Early Help course to help parents with children who have Autism and are awaiting diagnosis.

2.9.4.3. The wide variety of helpful services and impact was acknowledged by Ofsted in the 2021 Inspection report:
“Children and families have access to a wide range of helpful services at an early stage, which make a real difference to their lives.”

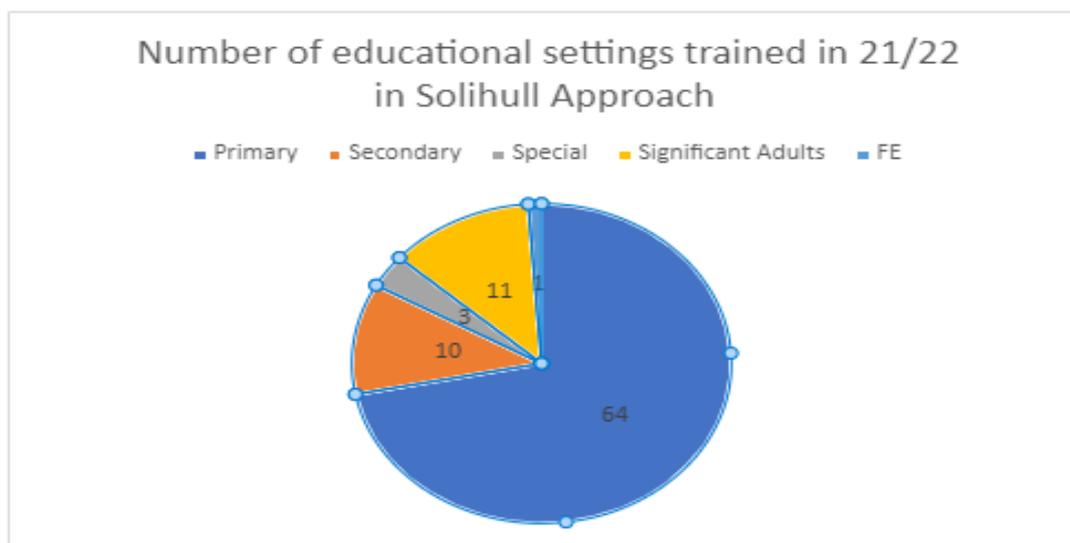
2.9.5. Practitioner Training

2.9.5.1. There has been continued development and investment in our wider multi-agency networks, sharing best practice, training, networking, and restorative circle opportunities, to grow the confidence, capabilities, and capacity of our multi-agency partners.

2.9.5.2. In 2021, a full-time trainer was recruited to deliver a comprehensive training offer to upskill our Designated Safeguarding Leads and Family Support workers in schools. This includes co-facilitation/production with our Early Years and Education teams.

2.9.5.3. The Foundation Solihull Approach training has been offered to all Warwickshire schools who have their own family support or pastoral provision, to provide consistency in approach for all families as a front-line family support offer directly in schools. This includes children attending on site nursery provision. 37% have been trained within the last year with training evaluations rating an increase in confidence of frontline practitioners at 230.77%. This will continue with schools over the coming year.

2.9.5.4. Since 2020, 156 Early Years Providers have accessed Early Help Training which provides a comprehensive overview of the stepped approach and Family Support Offer.



Widening the FSW impact - Practitioner Support Meetings

- 2.10. **Locality Family Support Network meetings** aim to share best practice, skills, knowledge, and support across the locality area from a variety of organisations. Led by the district or borough Early Help Team Leader, they include restorative problem-solving circles, providing practitioners with opportunities to explore appropriate support and interventions for families and identify and overcome any potential barriers at the earliest opportunity. Family Support Workers in schools, pastoral leads and Designated Safeguarding Leads from Early Years providers are welcome to join these sessions.
- 2.11. **Designated Safeguarding Lead Network** events have been created for School and Early Years Designated Safeguarding Leads to support them in their roles. This includes ensuring colleagues have a thorough understanding of the stepped approach and offer the right support at the right time. The importance of this is to ensure that DSLs are fully familiar with the FSW and parenting offer so can act early to signpost families for support.

In Ofsted's 2021 report they stated, "*Children and families in Warwickshire benefit from consistently good quality services.*"

Parental Feedback

- 2.12. As can be seen in the table below, upon the completion of interventions parents and carers are asked the 4 questions illustrated below/ They are asked to score the interventions upon a scale of 1 – 5.
- 1: Poor
 - 2: Fair
 - 3: Satisfactory
 4. Good
 5. Outstanding

Number of responses	How clearly were things explained to you?	How involved were you in the planning?	How much did you feel listened too?	How satisfied are you with the involvement of Children and Families?
1148	4.86	4.56	4.86	4.88

Parental Narrative

The following are direct quotes from families in relation to the support that they received from an EH Family Support Worker.

Everything! Communication with me and school was second to none, built a bridge with school and me when things had gone downhill a bit. Formed a lovely relationship with my children. The service didn't feel professional, FSW was just like a friend whilst being the professional, no judging and lots of encouraging words when I needed them when second questioning myself. Thank you for all your help, as a family we will never forget the help you have provided us - you've left your footprint on us!

Reunited a family who had undergone deep divisions due to family court proceedings which were complex. Without the help of FSW guidance we would not be in the position we are today with a reunited family which is going from strength to strength and one very happy and secure child. We cannot thank the FSW enough for all she has done and wish her all the best in the future.

FSW did everything well, she talked to everyone for me and explained long words to me as I do not read or write. I was reluctant and scared to have a FSW at the start as I am from the travelling community and I thought I would have my kids taken off me as there has been a lot of publicity of FB and a public march outside houses of parliament about family having kids taken off them from social services. Carleen reassured me, talked to me and understood me and did things that I could never have got done. myself and I'm really sad that's she's leaving me.

Had support before from parenting programmes but this time was different as time was taken to listen to me , strategies and approaches were individual to me as 'every family is different' i feel issues and understanding of the issues have been 'pinpointed'.. It has been overwhelming how much 'stronger' i feel, for the first time i have actually succeeded with the goals i wanted to reach. I feel light is at the end of the tunnel , i feel that even if things go wrong with the children's behaviour , i know what to do and i did not feel like that before i felt 'what am i going to do now" and just 'let em get on with it'. I feel little sad support has ended but excited as "i dont need you or anybody" in a good way as i also know its okay to have support , something which i have found difficult.

Areas of development

2.13. There are areas that the service wishes to continue to improve and is taking steps to action. These include

- Continue to work upon Family Support waiting list
- Development in Mosaic of dedicated work-flow consultation line
- Increase and strengthen the knowledge base of FSWs around neurodiversity

3. Children and Family Centre Service Model

3.1. The core elements of the Children and Family Centre service include:

- Coordination and administration of the designated Children & Family Centres and associated outreach provision.
- Provision of a range of stay, play and learn opportunities.
- Building of capacity and resilience within communities (especially those geographical communities in which the Children & Family Centre and outreach venues are located), including increased use of volunteers in service delivery.

Summary of service performance

3.2. Throughout 2021, the Children and Family Centre service ensured all centres remained open despite the impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic. Service delivery during this period was made up of a mixture of virtual and face-to-face provision and predominantly focused upon families within the first 1001 critical days age range. This was reflected by the partners offering services locally from the centres.

- 3.3. There are areas where the service is actively seeking to improve performance including outreach and offering services to families within 5-19 years, up to 25 years with SEND. The effects of that activity can be seen in increased delivery in these areas at St. Michael's.
- 3.4. Key service priorities and expected performance measures have been agreed for the extension period of the contract and will be reviewed as part of ongoing contract management. The Children and Family Centre service performance will continue to be scrutinised and monitored by the WCC Early Help Commissioner, Family Wellbeing.

Impact of Covid 19 on Children and Family Centres service delivery

- 3.5. All 3 core elements of service delivery have been impacted by Covid. The national lockdown in April 2020 resulted in the closure of 9 centres although 5 centres remained open to enable partner services to provide essential services for vulnerable groups.
- 3.6. A key element of the service is to enable partners, including WCC and CCG commissioned services to have access to premises to deliver their services locally meeting community needs. A number of partners moved to virtual delivery models in 2020 which continued in 2021. This resulted in limited delivery of this element of the service which includes partners providing 5-19 years, up to 25 years with SEND services.
- 3.7. However, the recovery of the service commenced during summer 2020, using a phased approach and between August 2020 and October 2020, 11 centres re-opened with 3 remaining centres opening by December 2020:

Phase 1

- Re-open all centres
- Maintain virtual timetable of activities
- Prioritise offering face-to-face appointments from referrals received
- Obtain advice from County Council's Legal services to mitigate risks of future closures during subsequent lockdowns
- Continue partnership engagement through District Advisory Boards and offering access to premises.

Phase 2

- Resume providing services at outreach locations
- Increase number of partner services at centres
- Re-establish face to face stay, play and learning opportunities.

- 3.8. The pandemic impacts on core service elements have included:

- Continued delivery of virtual timetables of stay, play and learning opportunities (first 1001 critical days, 0-5 years).

- Majority of outreach venues remained closed until Spring 2021 (lockdown 3).
- WCC services and other partner services working remotely, virtual service models.
- Re-introduction of face-to-face group activities delivered by the Children and Family Centre Early Years teams with reduced group sizes, resulting in waiting lists.
- Limited-service provision offered at outreach venues, (x2 locations from October 2020).
- Centres accessible by appointment only, previously families could drop in.
- Service volunteers unable to support direct service delivery.

Current performance – up to December 2021

3.9. Throughout 2021, the service has ensured that all core centres remained open which is a significant achievement. This facilitated access to partner services who had resumed offering face-to face services and enabled staff to continue to prioritise meeting families referred to the service, increasing the offer of face-to-face activities.

3.10. The Children and Family Centre service is measured against outcome-based performance indicators. Between January and December 2021, performance against those indicators was as follows:

Reporting activity and target	Barnardo's	St. Michael's
100% delivery against core operational hours	99.79%	100%
Delivery against 6 high level key performance indicators outcomes, at least 50% of families	100%	77%
Service delivery at outreach venues <i>% of total attendance at outreach services versus overall CFC service attendance</i>	3.8%	19.7%
10% of total service delivery hours are supported by volunteers	12.7%	65%
Total delivery by partner services <i>% of total attendances at partners services versus overall CFC service attendance</i>	37%	55%
Attendances at CFC services within 0-4 years	37.4%	31.6%
Attendances at CFC services within 5-19 years	2.6%	26%
Attendances at CFC services with SEN/disability	1.3%	4.7%
Total attendances at CFC service	69,666	7924

3.11. In addition to performance against the above indicators, there were a number of notable successes during the same period:

- Delivery against priority age range, first 1001 critical days programme through both virtual and face to face activities.
- Increased use of social media platforms and other communication channels signposting families to partner services and providing information.
- Strengthening of District Advisory Boards.

- A successful Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme delivered by St Michael's during 4 weeks of summer school holidays for 146 children (4-11 years).
- Barnardo's utilised own charitable funds to support families in need.
- St. Michael's delivered a significant number of food parcels to families in need during lockdowns.

Service issues/challenges

3.12. Whilst the service continued to operate during the pandemic, it did so within Covid regulations which therefore resulted in reduced numbers of families and partners being able to attend at centres. The pandemic further affected staffing levels with illness and isolation periods impacting on resources. The service was however able to utilise staff across the service by district to reduce possibilities of closures.

Barnardo's

- 3.8% of overall service attendance was delivered at outreach locations.
- 2.6% of overall service attendance within 5-19 years, versus 37.4% of children 0-4 years.
- 85% of all partner services were Health Visiting and Midwifery, limited representation from partner services across 5-19 years.
- Limited service offer within 0-25 years SEND - 1.3%.
- Overall contract management of service by the provider.

St. Michael's

- Increase service offer within 5-19 years age range, currently 26%.
- Limited service offer 0-25 years SEND - 4.7%.
- Increase service delivery at outreach locations.

Performance including the service priorities will continue to be managed as part of regular contract management.

Actions taken to increase performance by the commissioned providers

3.13. Discussions between People Strategy and Commissioning and Children and Families have determined a set of four key service priorities for the contract extension period (1st September 2022 – 31st August 2023) which are already embedded within the expected service delivery model. Those key priorities are

1. Developing and enhancing the service offer across the , 5-19 years age range.
2. In collaboration with the Early Years Sufficiency and Family Information Service teams, supporting and improving the take up rate of 2-year funded nursery education places for eligible families.
3. Prioritising speech, language and communication needs through delivery of language rich stay and play sessions, Chatter Matters, and other targeted programmes delivered by partner services

4. Ongoing review of all outreach locations, where specific services can be delivered in response to support meeting local needs (i.e. new builds, closure of community premises, resettlement families).
- 3.14. Expected performance measures for each priority have been stipulated and will be measured via quarterly data returns and additional quality assurance activities, and will be evaluated as part of ongoing contract management reviews.
- 3.15. Providers will be required to develop an operational plan. The operational plan will demonstrate how the provider will strengthen service delivery to continuously improve, to ensure they are supporting improving outcomes for children and families and delivering against the contract.
- 3.16. The Children and Family Centre service performance will continue to be scrutinised and monitored by the WCC Early Help Commissioner, Family Wellbeing to ensure that the identified priorities are addressed within the contract.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1. Demand has increased for Family Support because of the Pandemic and as a result of focused work in social care to ensure the right support is delivered by the right team at the right time. This has impacted upon capacity and therefore staffing has increased.
- 4.2. General COVID 19 grant has funded some family support workers on fixed term contracts, and there is work underway to identify more FSW resource for Early Help from within the current Children and Family service budget.
- 4.3. Current value of the Children and Family Centres contract is £6,016,667 over three years (01/09/19 – 31/08/22)
- 4.4. Value of the Children and Family Centres contract is £2,040,000 over one year (01/09/22 – 31/08/23)
- 4.5. Contractors delivering the service are expected to deliver the improvements set out within the contracted values.

5. Environmental Implications

Some family support visits are occurring virtually because of the pandemic and due to family request. This reduces the carbon footprint impact upon the environment as some travel has reduced.

Appendices

1. Appendix 1 – CFC Service Performance Data Set 01/01/21 – 31/12/21

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

Local Member(s): Cllr Caroline Phillips

Other members: Councillors Dahmash, Roodhouse & Brown