

Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Cultural Change in Children's Social Care – performance and sustainability plan

14 February 2023

1. Recommendation(s)

The committee are asked to consider the impact of the Children and Families change programme and plans to sustain these new ways of working.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 At the start of 2020 the Children and Families service embarked on ambitious change programme journey. The change programme was funded by £12m one-off investment from the Department for Education (DfE) and the Council's Children Transformation Fund.
- 2.2 The change programme encompassed of evidence-based initiatives to improve outcomes for children and families. The changes included, new services, the expansion and improvement of services and additional training and resources to practitioners and partners.
- 2.3 All elements of the programme were successfully implemented with positive outcomes being achieved for children and families. The programme has led to a reduction in social care need with earlier intervention and families being supported to end plans safely
- 2.4 The one-off funding ends in March 2023. Following the successful outcomes realised from the initiatives, the Children and Families started to plan how these new ways of working can be maintained post March 2023. These plans were finalised and implemented at the start of January 2023. These plans included a re-structure which saw the service increase its overall workforce to continue to support families at the right time with the right support at every level of need.
- 2.5 This report details key outcomes achieved and plans moving forward.

3. Children and Families change programme

- 3.1 The change programme supported the development of child-centred, family focused and relational approaches across the whole service, this included creating new services and strengthening existing services.
- 3.2 In detail, the below highlights some of the changes that were introduced to support children and families
 - expanded early help support across communities to ensure the right support is provided at the right time. This included recruiting head teacher coaches to work with countywide head teachers and designated

safeguarding leads to support with confidence in providing early help to the young people in their schools.

- enhanced community approach to early help to enable children, young people, and families to be supported with increased opportunities and access to youth workers, including within schools and detached work.
- created a new service (Support Team for Adolescent Young People) to work with young people at risk of coming into care at the very earliest possible time to improve the relationships between parent(s) and young people and reduce the need for escalation and intervention.
- to support relationships within families and support plans to end safely the domestic abuse service was expanded
- created a new programme (Caring Dads) to work with fathers in order to change controlling, abusive and neglectful behaviours and to improve their relationships with their children.
- expanded the Family Group Conferencing (FGC) team and offer to support more families to develop their own solutions.
- strengthened support to Special Guardians to support children to remain with families.
- embedded substance misuse, domestic abuse and adult mental health practitioners within Children and Families teams to deliver a multi-disciplinary service to strengthen support to whole families to achieve sustained change for parents and their children.
- enhanced support to foster carers with an extended family model (Treehouse Network) supporting them to improve their confidence and provide additional support to the family.
- expanded the Different Futures (DF) service to provide extensive support to parents to address the difficulties in their lives, reducing their risks as a parent and working on their needs as an individual with the aim of breaking the cycle of recurrent care proceedings.
- increased support to care experienced young people and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children with additional Care Advisers to support them to enrol onto education, complete training or find employment.
- invested in relational practices to strengthen relationships and improve approaches to engaging with children, young people and families with the creation of a dedicated Restorative Practice team.
- developed a strong learning and wellbeing offer to the workforce, including dedicated structured support to newly qualified social workers

- to support wider child focused practices across Warwickshire introduced the Child Friendly Warwickshire (CFW) initiative. Through prioritising relationships and building on partnership working, CFW brings the county together in a collective effort to ensure the best outcomes for our children and young people.

3.3 The benefits to change, especially cultural change is never immediate. During 2020/21 there were increases in need largely as a result of the pandemic. During the pandemic the picture in Warwickshire reflected the national picture, there was an increase in children and young people mental health needs, and an increase in referrals when the restrictions were lifted. In December 21 following the national reporting of the tragic deaths of Arthur Labinjo-Hughes and Star Hobson there was an increase in the number of child protection plans. During 2022/23 there has been a reduction in social care need with earlier intervention and families being supported to end plans safely as outlined in the table below:

	March 20	March 21	March 22	June 22	Sept 22	Dec 22
12 month average of children entering care (excluding UASC)	22.58	26.08	21.00	19.33	17.92	18.67
No. and rate of children in care excluding UASC	681 (57.8)	776 (65.9)	730 (61.3)	730 (61.3)	708 (59.4)	693 (58.2)
No. of Children in Need	4073	4165	4140	4198	4009	3745
No. of Child Protection Plans	295	349	400	423	417	346

3.4 Further key achievements and outcomes are detailed below

- Successful partnership Early Help Summit took place in January 2023, bringing together over 150 professionals across Warwickshire to celebrate key achievements and explore future developments.
- Supporting more children earlier and as they step down from social care support. During 2022, Early Help worked with 5375 children compared to 3,539 children during the 2020 calendar year. This is a 51.9% increase. The number of children open to a Targeted Support Officer (TSO) has seen a particular increase between the 2020 and 2022 calendar year, increasing by 161%. Between 1 April 2020 to 31 December 2022, 86.2% of children open to Early Help have their needs met and they do not require specialist help.

- In 2022, 81% (222) of young people after working with a youth worker reported that their youth worker had helped them make positive changes in their life, and 96% (263) of young people reported that their youth worker changed their behaviour in a good way. Between December 21 – December 22, young people's average issue scores increased from assessment to closure
 - emotion management 3.0 to 3.8
 - empathy 3.1 to 3.7
 - initiative 3.1 to 3.6
 - problem Solving 3.0 to 3.5
 - responsibility 3.3 to 3.7
 - team work 3.1 to 3.6

In addition, at their initial assessment, 94% of young people said they would not consider carrying a bladed article, this increased to 97% after their final assessment.

- Implemented a Therapeutic Intervention fund within out Different Futures service to support clients beyond the 2-year initial support package. As at December 2022 10 clients are in therapy and two are waiting to start.
- Between September 21 to December 22, the Support Team for Adolescent Young People team prevented 97 (86.61%) young people going into care.
- The additional domestic abuse support and improved processes have helped to support families sooner and reduce waiting lists. Between November 21 to November 22 the average number of days between receiving a referral and assigning it to a worker (opened to assigned) stood at 15 days, this has reduced from 31 days between January 21 to October 21.
- To date 61 dads have completed the Caring Dads programme, and this positively impacted 158 children and young people.
- Between December 21 and December 22, 145 families met 91.4% of their outcomes identified as part of their Family Group Conference plans. Of these 145 families, 46 families were supported to prevent children or young people becoming children in care (84 children).
- Robust and effective support to families has led to less families starting and entering court processes. Pre-proceedings numbers are low (30, December 22) and pre-proceeding work continues to divert a large proportion of families from care proceedings (approx. 55% are diverted). No. of care proceedings continue to fall from 105 in November 21 to 58 in December 22. No. of children issued in the Family Court continues to fall for the past 5 financial years, and the trend appears to continue into 2022/23 with only 50 families issued this year so far (December 22), compared to 93 families in 2021/22 and 124 in 2020/21.

- Supporting more children to live with families, with an increase in Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs) from 31 in 2019/20 to 46 in 2021/22 and child arrangement orders from 10 in 2019/20 to 16 in 2021/22. In 2021/22 24% of children in care lived with family, friends or parents, this increased slightly from 21% in 2019/20.
- A reduction in need and more staff in post has led to a reduction in average workloads from 18.6 children in July 22 to 15.6 children in December 2022.
- Positive feedback from children and families, in Quarter 3 2022/23 children, young people and family scores (out of 5) were 4.6 for clear explanation; 4.5 for involvement in planning; 4.5 in feeling listened to; and 4.5 for satisfaction.
- Since launching the programme in Oct 2021, 130 businesses, organisations, charities and community groups in Warwickshire have committed to putting children and young people at the heart of what they do and aspire to increase and develop their Child Friendly activity and art part of our 'Network of Friends'. From becoming a Fostering Friendly organisation, to donating presents to our Children in Care Christmas party there are many ways that the Friends are contributing to CFW.
- The first CFW Youth Conference was hosted on Thursday 21 April 2021 and organised by young people, for young people. The 'Future Ready' Conference, brought together local organisations with young people to create a safe space to talk about important issues facing young people today. The conference aimed to give young people a voice. Young people chose the five topics for the day, which were: - climate change - mental health - careers - respectful relationships, and - youth homelessness. 76 young people attended, ranging from ages 11 to 17.
- Positive staff survey results, in July 22 staff agreed that
 - they feel proud to work here – 85%
 - they feel committed to the organisation – 88%
 - they feel a strong sense of belong here – 71%
 - working here makes them want to do the best work I can – 85%
 - feel inspired to do my best work here – 78%
 - they know where to access support for their wellbeing – 84%
 - their manager cares about their wellbeing – 87%
 - they feel included within their team – 86%
- Positive Ofsted inspection outcome in 2021, rated "Good" in all areas.

3.5 The What Works Centre are working on behalf of the Department of Education to evaluate the impact of the programme in Warwickshire and other local authority areas. A confirmed completion and publication date of the evaluation is to be confirmed.

4. Sustainability Plans

- 4.1 In total the County Council has agreed a permanent additional allocation of £3,346m which funds the new staff structure. The service establishment was 758.13 FTE, with an additional 78.71 FTE funded by the DfE and WCC transformation fund, giving a total of 836.84 FTE. The new structure and permanent funding permanently increases the establishment to 851.41 FTE posts.
- 4.2 In December 22 the service completed a re-structure designed to sustain and maintain these new ways of working and be in a healthy position to implement the forthcoming changes outlined in the National Care review. Key changes included:
- an increase in the overall workforce to enable us to manage need;
 - a focus on early family support and multidisciplinary working to 'step down' children to lower levels of intervention;
 - integrated teams to enable more efficient support to families;
 - increased support to a wider cohort of children on the edge of care and children who are experiencing exploitation, at risk of homelessness and who have mental health difficulties.

5. Next steps

- 5.1 Moving forward the service's key priorities following the re-structure are to continue to embed these new ways of working and support staff with changes.
- 5.2 The service is already working on a Continuous Improvement Plan for 2023-2025 to continue this improvement journey. Whilst the service is considering the detail of these next steps, the intention is to mature relational approaches to a place of continuous improvement where the service can realise its ambitions to provide outstanding services to the children, young people and families within a Child Friendly Warwickshire.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 In total the County Council agreed a permanent additional allocation of £3,346m which has funded the new staff structure.

7. Environmental Implications

- 7.1 None

Appendices

None

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

Local members: none

Other members: none.