

# Proposed Decision to be made by the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services on or after 18 October 2019

## Parent Carer Assessment Review

### Recommendation

That the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services authorises the undertaking of a consultation exercise on the process, procedure and outcomes for Parent Carer Assessments.

### 1.0 Key Issues

- 1.1 It is time to update the Parent Carer Assessment (PCA) so that it reflects the current challenges and needs of parents. Warwickshire County Council has a statutory obligation to complete a PCA on request from any parent. The mechanism of how an assessment is undertaken and the outcomes it achieves are within the LA remit to decide.
- 1.2 The current assessment form has been in operation for a number of years and a formal process/procedure was never designed but evolved on a reactive basis depending upon the request. The process in place has never been reviewed or scrutinised in line with changes to practice and parental needs. There is no transparent guidance for parent carers or practitioners to follow.
- 1.3 Currently, requests for a PCA become an assessment of the child on the basis that they are processed through MASH. This results in a lengthy and intrusive assessment process when the need for social care has not necessarily been requested. For mainstream social care cases, if an assessment of the child results in no further action, the parent carer needs may become lost in the system on the basis that the large majority of these cases are closed.
- 1.4 Alignment with the adult social care process would alleviate issues when it is time for the transition into adult social care.
- 1.5 The current assessment form was written in partnership with parent carers, which is positive co-production, but is a self-reporting document and very subjective. The form allows for limited discussion of the responses given.
- 1.6 The current way of scoring the assessment, which is linked to the comment above regarding self-reporting etc., means that anyone who has a parent carer assessment will score positively. The current scoring process has no guidance which allows the practitioner to determine a suitable score based on presenting evidence. Furthermore, the background to how the scores were agreed is unclear.

- 1.7 The only outcome currently for Parent Carer Assessment is a financial payment in the form of a direct payment. The current outcomes are based on the number of points scored, the higher the points the more money the parent carer receives.
- 1.8 There is currently no guidance on what the money can be used for and therefore across Warwickshire there is no consistency. Some parent carers use the money to purchase support services, others use it to access community activities and some do not use the money at all and it simply accumulates in their direct payment account.
- 1.9 The current process for review of a parent carer assessment is not consistent. The expectation is that the reviews will take place every 6 months, however, most parent care assessments are never reviewed and therefore the parent continues to receive money regardless of outcomes being met or using the money at all.
- 1.10 Engagement work has taken place with Warwickshire Parent Carer Forum and SENDIAS. There is an appetite for change regarding the assessment process.
- 1.11 The guidance is not clear for parents on how to access, where to access and the process that the application will follow. There is a lack of information for parents to access in the public domain provided by Warwickshire. In addition, parents repeatedly tell their story to several different members of staff and this acts as a barrier for parents to make applications for the assessment.

## **2.0 Proposal**

- 2.1 Provide a clear explanation of the pathway that parents can expect when requesting a PCA. This will ensure that outcomes are meaningful and appropriate. This will be available on the Warwickshire web pages for parents to access easily and set appropriate expectations for their customer journey.
- 2.2 Seek to provide a streamlined pathway for parents to request an assessment to ensure that they are directed to the right people at the right time who can assist them in their request.
- 2.3 Ensure Practitioners are equipped with the knowledge and understanding of the parent carer assessment process to ensure that applications are completed, processed and concluded within an appropriate and acceptable time frame following set policies and procedures.
- 2.4 The redesigned assessment will adopt a strengths based/restorative practice approach to reflect the model that Warwickshire Children's and adults social care have adopted.
- 2.5 Guidance, policies and procedures will be delivered to ensure that the process is consistent and transparent across the county and between practitioners.

- 2.6 Complete a full review of the document (in collaboration with the Parent Carer Forum) that is used to gather information for the assessment. This will ensure that there is consistency in the approach moving away from a self-reporting process to one that is based on professional opinion and evidence.
- 2.7 Complete a full review of the evaluation and scoring matrix of the assessment to ensure consistent and transparent outcomes are achieved that are fit for purpose.
- 2.8 We will look to align the parent carer assessment process with adult carers assessment process where reasonable and practical to do so.
- 2.9 If a parent carer assessment is requested by an eligible individual it must be undertaken. It is the service offered that may differ and take the form of signposting in appropriate cases, where need is assessed to be low.
- 2.10 One-off payments will be considered as opposed to ongoing payments where a need is identified (similar to the adult process). For the purposes of ongoing payments, the frequency of reviews will be clarified and a process to undertake them will be defined and outcomes/decisions to be recorded on Mosaic. There is a risk that financial payments could increase due to greater awareness. However, the new process will address the issue of ongoing payments without review and will also signpost people to non-financial alternatives.
- 2.11 A facility will be built into Mosaic to enable reporting on the number of assessments undertaken, the outcomes and the value of the spend on PCA's. This will allow a clear understanding of the demand to ensure we are providing the correct level of support to carers

### **3.0 Consultation overview**

- 3.1 We are seeking permission to consult on the Parent Carer Assessment between 11th November 2019 and 13th December 2019. Currently, we are engaging with representatives across the authority, including key partners from outside of the authority, to develop the new process in readiness to present a proposed option for comment throughout the consultation.
- 3.2 Consultation materials are currently in preparation as the proposed process is still being developed. These can be shared with the Portfolio Holder prior to the consultation being launched.
- 3.3 The consultation will engage with the public and key stakeholders in a number of ways:
  - a. Information and an online questionnaire will be publicly available on Warwickshire County Council's consultation and engagement hub, Ask Warwickshire.
  - b. Current recipients of the parent carer payments will be contacted by post to inform them of the consultation regarding the PCA.

- c. Parent Carer Forum workshop
- d. Meetings will be held with key stakeholders
- e. We are exploring the feasibility of holding a drop-in event or events to support the consultation

3.4 Stakeholders include but are not limited to: Service users, general public, Family Information Service, SENCO's, Health, Associated external agencies, WCC staff, Short Breaks providers.

3.5 The Marketing and Communications team will support communications

3.6 The costs of the consultation will be covered within existing budgets.

## 4.0 Financial Implications

4.1 This report is primarily concerned with the processes and procedures for the assessments from both a customer/ client as well as practitioners points of view and their user experience. As noted in paragraph 2.9 there is a risk that financial payments could increase due to greater awareness. Current total forecasted expenditure for 2019/20 (before any changes) is in the region of £30,000 to £40,000. It is presumed there will be little or no additional pressure on the budget as a result of the outcomes of this paper. Any risks are mitigated by addressing the issue of ongoing payments without review and will also signpost people to non-financial alternatives as well as one-off payments as opposed to ongoing payments.

## 5.0 Timescales associated with the decision and next steps

The table below identifies the key milestones

|  |                         |
|--|-------------------------|
| Portfolio Holder Approval                                      | 18.10.19                |
| Consultation period  | 5 Weeks                 |
| Mid-point review   | 27.11.19                |
| Analysis of results and Consultation report (Insights Service) | 16.12.19 - 03.01.2020   |
| Corporate Board review   | 14.01.20                |
| Overview and Scrutiny committee meeting                        | If required             |
| Cabinet meeting  | 30.01.2020              |
| Feedback to stakeholders                                       | From 06.02.2020 onwards |
| Implementation date  | 01.04.2020              |

## Background papers

None

|  | <b>Name</b>            | <b>Contact Information</b>   |
|--|------------------------|--|
| Report Author                                      | Matt Greenhalgh        | <a href="mailto:mattgreenhalgh@warwickshire.gov.uk">mattgreenhalgh@warwickshire.gov.uk</a><br>(01926) 413737 |
| Assistant Director<br>(Children & Families)        | John Coleman           | <a href="mailto:johncoleman@warwickshire.gov.uk">johncoleman@warwickshire.gov.uk</a><br>(01926) 742577       |
| Assistant Director<br>(Education Services)         | Ian Budd               | <a href="mailto:ianbudd@warwickshire.gov.uk">ianbudd@warwickshire.gov.uk</a><br>(01926) 742588               |
| Strategic Director<br>(People Directorate)         | Nigel Minns            | <a href="mailto:nigelminns@warwickshire.gov.uk">nigelminns@warwickshire.gov.uk</a><br>(01926) 412665         |
| Strategic Director<br>(Communities<br>Directorate) | Mark Ryder             | <a href="mailto:markryder@warwickshire.gov.uk">markryder@warwickshire.gov.uk</a><br>(01926) 412811           |
| Portfolio Holder                                   | Councillor Jeff Morgan | <a href="mailto:jeffmorgan@warwickshire.gov.uk">jeffmorgan@warwickshire.gov.uk</a>                           |

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

Councillors Dahmash, Chattaway, Morgan, Roodhouse, Chilvers, Williams, Hayfield and C. Davies