

Cabinet

Parent Carer Support Pathway

14 May 2020

1. Recommendation

That Cabinet authorises the Strategic Director for People to implement the new Parent & Carer Assessment Pathway as set out in paragraph 2.3 of the report.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. Any parent carer of a child with a disability who has parental responsibility has the right to request a parent carer needs assessment ([Children and Families Act 2014](#)). Therefore, Warwickshire County Council has a statutory obligation to undertake and provide an 'assessment' of a Parent Carer who has a child aged 0-18 with a disability. The mechanism of how an assessment is undertaken and the outcomes it achieves are within the Local Authority's remit to decide.
- 2.2. The pathway and processes for an assessment have not been reviewed or updated for a significant period of time. Feedback from parents, the parent carer forum, partners and practitioners indicate that the current offer is not satisfying the needs of our community.
- 2.3. Our new proposal includes the following elements
 - The name is changed from Parent Carer Assessment to Parent Carer Support Pathway.
 - The new Pathway includes a Wellbeing Conversation which replaces the current 'Assessment' paperwork. The Wellbeing Conversation will focus on a person-centred approach that identifies the parent carers needs and the areas for support.
 - The pathway is reduced from 14 steps to a maximum of 5.
 - MASH will no longer be the point of access to a service and that customers can gain access to the Parent Carer Support Pathway through the Customer Service Centre or via online pages.

- Outcomes change from a financial award only, to a tiered outcome of signposting, one-off payments (for an agreed service / item) to a Social Care Assessment. A social care assessment will be conducted under Section 17 and will consider the needs of the child / young person and the Parent Carer.
- The Parent Carer Pathway can be accessed numerous times without limitations (removing the current review requirement)
- There is comprehensive information provided on the Warwickshire County Council Website allowing residents to self-serve.

3. Background

- 3.1 Currently, parents requesting an assessment are assessed through a formal social care assessment which people tell us is not always appropriate. The proposal is to move away from an assessment process to one that is based on a Carer's Wellbeing Conversation that meets need with targeted and focused support. To reflect this, we are proposing that the name changes from Parent Carer Assessment to Parent Carer Support Pathway.
- 3.2 The questionnaire used in the current process is unclear and does not provide a robust framework of assessment. The Wellbeing Conversation will allow the focus to move away from meeting a threshold towards a guided conversation that identifies need and therefore appropriate support for families.
- 3.3 Currently, requests are made through the MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub) and this can begin a pathway of up to fourteen steps. The proposed approach has a maximum of five steps and, through the Customer Service Centre, there will be direct access to the Children with Disabilities team who will be conducting the Wellbeing Conversation. Alternatively, there will be substantial information on the Warwickshire website to navigate parents through the application process. There will also be the opportunity to make an online application or request a practitioner to make contact (see appendix 1). The practitioners will then contact the customer and undertake the Wellbeing Conversation (provided the parent carer has a child who meets the basic requirement of having a disability). This will ensure that residents receive the right information and right support at the right time.
- 3.4 We have also considered the current processes to support adult carers as this will help to align (where possible) the Parent Carer Support Pathway with the Adult Carers' pathway. This will ensure that when young people transition into adult services the parent carers receive a seamless service.
- 3.5 Outcomes from assessments are currently restricted to a financial award only, omitting any tailored support that may be beneficial to parent carers' needs. The proposed outcomes will follow a tiered approach. There are separate levels of support that can be combined if required, to ensure all parent carer needs are met. Firstly, signposting to a suitable organisation, support group or

specialist service will be explored. Secondly, a financial award will be considered for a specific service, activity or piece of equipment in order to assist a parent carer and resolve an area of difficulty. Thirdly, if the Wellbeing Conversation identifies wider needs, a social care assessment will be offered to support the family. This will be optional for parent carers under Section 17.

- 3.6 Currently ongoing payments are provided continually once awarded and spend for the award is not clear. Review points are not always completed and we are aware that needs change for families over time. To resolve this, providing unlimited access to the Parent Carer Support Pathway and Wellbeing Conversation will ensure that financial awards are provided for a specific agreed purpose and this will be a one-off payment (for up to 12 months should this be for an activity, membership or service). Should the family require further support in this time, they can re-access the service and a new Wellbeing Conversation will be undertaken

4. Consultation Process

- 4.1 A consultation on the proposed changes to the Parent Carer Pathway was undertaken from 6th January 2020 – 9th February 2020. The aim of the consultation was to engage and obtain feedback from a range of residents and stakeholders. Particular focus was on those that would be directly affected by any changes, such as, parent carers currently in receipt of a parent carers' payment, those involved with social care and parents that have children with disabilities across Warwickshire County.
- 4.2 The consultation was framed around the proposed changes to the name of the process, access to the service, a proposed new pathway, the Wellbeing Conversation content and outcomes.
- 4.3 Prior to the consultation, workshops were conducted with participants from SENDIASS (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information Advice and Support Service), partners and practitioners from within Warwickshire County Council in order to shape the proposed offer for the consultation. A workshop was also undertaken with Warwickshire Parent Carer Forum and proposals were also shared virtually with parents that were unable to attend. Warwickshire Parent Carers Forum also conducted a survey that was undertaken by 134 residents and feedback from this was used to inform the proposed pathway in the consultation also (see appendix 6).
- 4.4 Within the consultation period, key activity included a number of drop-in sessions. Two took place in the south of the county and two in the north. The sessions covered daytime and evening provision in both locations to maximise opportunities for residents to attend. Attendance was poor. Only two parents attended the first session in the South overall. The two parents were members of the Warwickshire Parent Carer Forum and had engaged with us at the workshop prior to the consultation.

- 4.5 To promote the consultation, we wrote to current recipients of the Parent Carer Payments at the beginning of the consultation and again towards the end. The consultation was also promoted widely through a range of marketing and communication channels. We can be confident from circulation figures subscription lists and followers that communication activity reached a minimum of 88,000 people during the period of the consultation (see Appendix 5 for full Comms Log):
- 4.6 The promotion encouraged residents to engage in the consultation and respond through an online survey through the “Ask Warwickshire” platform. Residents were able to call or email to request a printed version of the consultation document which they could return by pre-paid post to Warwickshire County Council. The email address and phone number were also offered for direct enquiries regarding the proposed changes.
- 4.7 Website statistics indicate that there was good awareness of the consultation with 370 users visiting the home page of the consultation which provided information on the proposals. However, survey completion was low (61). This suggests that having read the information people did not choose to comment.

5. Outcomes following Consultation responses

- 5.1 Following the consultation, several responses indicated areas of development that would be required to deliver the proposed changes to the Parent Carer Assessment (see appendix 3 and 4).
- 5.2 Although half of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the new process would enable parent carers to make contact easier, around 45% disagreed or were neutral. There was also comment on information provision required to support parent carers and direct them to other services. The proposal presents a pathway that removes the step to access the service via MASH. This will ensure that parents will be able to access the Children with Disabilities Team more efficiently by either calling the Customer Service Centre (and be transferred to a duty worker) or via a new online option. We will be building new web pages that will contain comprehensive information (and links to external support providers) with an option to submit an electronic form to the team to request a call back. Future phases of the form will provide parent carers the opportunity to complete a version of the Wellbeing Conversation form for submission. Once submitted, this will alert the team to contact the parent to discuss further.
- 5.3 Almost 40% of respondents strongly agreed/agreed the Wellbeing Conversation would be more person centred than the current assessment, although almost the same proportion neither agreed nor disagreed. The proposed Wellbeing Conversation is intended to act as a framework to assist skilled practitioners to conduct a guided conversation. This will prompt to

ensure all areas of a parent carer or family's wellbeing are addressed but will be used flexibly to ensure that the conversation is person focused and responsive.

- 5.4 Several responses indicated the need to have skilled practitioners conducting the Wellbeing Conversation to appropriately support parent carers. In response to these concerns, a comprehensive training programme will be developed to ensure that the practitioners within Warwickshire County Council are fully skilled to deliver the support parent carers require. There will be guidance documents for practitioners and parents to assist them in completing the Wellbeing Conversation.
- 5.5 Several comments in the survey and the direct responses received would like to see a more proactive approach to promoting parent carer wellbeing. Marketing and Communications have been consulted and will develop a robust programme of marketing to ensure that the Parent Carer Pathway is heavily promoted across Warwickshire. This will include cascading awareness to all services and provisions engaged with Children's Services. This will assist in ensuring that parents are signposted appropriately.
- 5.6 There were concerns that services used to signpost to are stretched and do not have capacity to support parent carers. To address this, we will need to engage with local groups and through partnership working, ensure that we are referring parent carers correctly to their service. This will inform our practice, upskill our practitioners and allow good communication between our services and provide an appropriate support network for parents.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

- 6.1 Following the consultation, the Equality Impact Assessment has been reviewed. Apart from comments regarding the presentation of material within the consultation, no issues indicated any changes required (see appendix 2).

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 This report is primarily concerned with the processes and procedures for the proposed Parent Carer Support Pathway. This is from both a customer, client and practitioners' point of view and having regard to their user experience. The expenditure for 2019/20 (before any changes) is £41,000 and the budget for this is included within the overall Children with Disabilities budget. There is a risk that financial payments could increase due to greater awareness of the offer, but it is expected that this potential risk will be offset by the new approach to reviewing payments as well as signposting parents to non-financial alternatives.

8 Environmental Implications

8.1 There are no particular environmental implications arising from this report.

Appendices

1. Process Map of new proposed pathway
2. Equality Impact Assessment
3. Consultation Findings – Summary
4. Report on Consultation Findings
5. Comms Log
6. Carers Assessment Questionnaire summary

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

Local Member: N/A

Other members: Councillors Jeff Morgan and Colin Hayfield