

# Children & Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee

23 February 2021

## Child Friendly Warwickshire

### Recommendation

That the Committee endorse the Child Friendly Warwickshire initiative and action plan

### 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Warwickshire County Council were successfully awarded £3.993m from the Department for Education (DfE) as part of the national 'Strengthening Families, Protecting Children programme' (SFPC). The programme consists of three different evidence-based models. The council have adopted the 'Leeds Family Valued' model. The Child Friendly Warwickshire initiative is a key element within this model.
- 1.2 The Children and Families service are embedding Restorative Practice within the service, across the wider council (as part of Start with Strengths) and across key partners. It is envisaged the service and council will continue to build wider partnership and community engagement and support for children through Child Friendly Warwickshire.
- 1.3 Warwickshire has a strong local business sector and good local partnership. A Child Friendly Warwickshire initiative can build on these strong relationships and help further strengthen community ties, enabling us to work restoratively with each other to build positive relationships.
- 1.4 This report outlines more about this initiative and how we can start to build a Child Friendly Warwickshire.

### 2. Child Friendly Warwickshire

#### 2.1 What do we mean by Child Friendly?

- 2.1.1 A child friendly city, town or community is committed to improving the lives of children, and is a place where the voices, needs, priorities and rights of children are fundamental in decisions.
- 2.1.2 UNICEF award formal Child Friendly City recognition following progress against a number of key areas over a period of three to five years. This proposal will adopt and aspire to the same principles and values as the UNICEF model, although we will not seek formal recommendation.

2.1.3 As part of our Child Friendly initiative we want to inspire a pledge from partners, local communities, and businesses to improve the lives of children across Warwickshire in any way they can. We want all children in Warwickshire to be:

- safe and secure;
- happy and healthy;
- live stable lives;
- able to enjoy learning and have employment opportunities; and
- involved in decisions that shape services that impact their lives.

2.1.4 We know across the council we are already doing lots of great work to promote safety and create learning and employment opportunities for children and young people. These activities will act as a springboard to help launch, promote and create a Child Friendly Warwickshire

### **3.0 Benefits**

3.1 By working restoratively with children, families, communities, partners and businesses to create a Child Friendly Warwickshire we can continue to strengthen our connections and build positive relationships across a number of different platforms.

3.2 Leeds City Council have said their 'Child Friendly Leeds' initiative has been crucial in securing and sustaining political, community and partnership support for prioritising the needs of children. Establishing a clear identity and high profile for promoting the voice, needs and interests of children within the city has been crucial to securing support from across the community and particularly with the business sector.

3.3 The Child Friendly Warwickshire initiative is aligned to the council's vision and priority outcomes:

- Vision
  - To make Warwickshire the best it can be, sustainable now and for future generations
- Priority outcomes
  - Warwickshire's communities and individuals are supported to be safe, healthy and independent
  - Warwickshire's economy is vibrant and supported by the right jobs, training, skills and infrastructure

3.4 Key Child Friendly Warwickshire outcomes include:

- Warwickshire is inclusive;
- Children's voices will influence and shape services;
- Warwickshire is an outstanding local authority for children;
- Children will be healthy and happy;
- Children will have stability with their families and communities;

- Children will love learning and have a job they enjoy; and
- Stronger partnerships with communities, supporting wide economic growth, development and opportunities.

3.5 The above outcomes will be measured via specific performance measures, which will include:

- Improvements in health and wellbeing indicators for children and young people
- Improvements in school readiness
- Improvements in educational attainment
- Reduction in the number of young people not in education, employment or training.
- Reduction in the number of people in the criminal youth justice system
- Positive feedback from young people and communities

3.6 The initiative is also aligned to and will support the social inequalities work being progressed by the People Directorate. It is also included in the council Covid-19 Recovery Plan.

#### **4.0 Impact of Covid-19**

4.1 Every aspect of children's lives has been affected by Covid-19. Children's learning, social skills and mental health have all been impacted. A number of different national organisations have reported on the experiences of children during the pandemic.

4.2 The [State of the nation 2020: children and young people's wellbeing](#) (October 2020) DfE report details publicly available data on children and young people's wellbeing. The DfE press release accompanying the report noted that overall children aged between 5 and 24 reported stable levels of happiness and only a slight reduction in satisfaction with their lives. The press release did note some areas of concern, these included:

- loneliness was an issue for some older young people
- one in every 15 children has low happiness with their health
- mental health difficulties have increased for some school-aged children over the months of the pandemic
- an increase in psychological distress has been found for older young people
- remote learning was not always easy
- the proportion of children achieving the recommended amount of physical activity for 60 minutes a day may have reduced
- some groups such as young disabled people reported higher and increasing feelings of being anxious
- parents reported that children with special educational needs or a disability from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds may be feeling more anxious

- young people who were economically disadvantaged reported lower life satisfaction in April to early May than those who were financially better off, though between July and early September there was no significant difference between these two groups.

4.3 The Child Friendly Warwickshire initiative will consider the above carefully to help identify key areas of activities and support for children and young people.

## 5.0 How will it work?

5.1 An implementation plan is included in Appendix A. The plan can be summarised as follows:

- start to introduce the Child Friendly Warwickshire initiative within the council;
- understand current Child Friendly initiatives or ideas across the council;
- identify children and young people priorities;
- strengthen the voice of children and young people in local decision making;
- identify levels of need across Warwickshire to target activities;
- promote Child Friendly Warwickshire externally; and
- identify how partners, third sector organisations, businesses and communities can get involved.

5.2 Examples of how businesses, partners, third sector organisations and communities could get involved include:

- Offering young people, the chance to be part of an interview panel
- Holding an open day to showcase their organisation and invite schools
- Donating prizes to local events or sponsoring a team
- Becoming a mentor
- Offering apprenticeships
- Offering volunteering opportunities
- Engaging children when making decisions
- Offering discounts
- Creating safe places for children to play close to their homes (Play Street)
- Creating sport / physical activity opportunities, for example Tour of Britain cycle race for children and young people
- Creating Child Friendly places / environments for children to visit
- Establishing foster friendly staff policies

All activities and contributions would be promoted and acknowledged.

- 5.3 Engaging with children and young people is fundamental in establishing Child Friendly Warwickshire. They will help to identify their key priorities and help us understand how Child Friendly Warwickshire should look and feel. The Children and Families service are currently mapping a network of contacts and methods to help us engage with children and young people.
- 5.4 Local networks for example Locality Early Action Partnerships and intelligence will also be used to identify priorities and target promotion and activity.
- 5.5 Across Warwickshire we want everyone to think about 'what is it like to be a child growing up in Warwickshire and how can we make it better'. The initiative is about being proud of our children and young people and including them in everything we do so that they are valued and engaged, grow into confident adults, stay with us and contribute to our economy and help us grow our communities.

## **6.0 Financial Implications**

- 6.1 The initiative has been 100% funded by DfE funding, with a grant payment of £243,000 across two years.
- 6.2 A Marketing and Communications Officer for a one-year fixed term contract to lead marketing and engagement activity will be funded from this budget. This equates to £45,000. The recruitment of a dedicated officer to work on Child Friendly Warwickshire activities will also be considered and the additional spend will also be scoped.
- 6.3 UNICEF and Leeds colleagues both report that this initiative does not have to be costly. A key aim of this initiative is to enhance the way we work with children and strengthen collaboration with communities and partners to improve outcomes for children.

## **7.0 Environmental Implications**

None

## **8.0 Appendices**

Appendix A - Introducing Child Friendly Warwickshire (short version) and implementation plan

## **Background Papers**

None

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Contact Information</b>
Report Author	Anita Lekhi	Anitalekhi@warwickschire.gov.uk
Assistant Director	John Coleman	johncoleman@warwickshire.gov.uk
Lead Director	Strategic Director for People	nigelminns@warwickshire.gov.uk
Lead Member	Jeff Morgan	jeffmorgan@warwickshire.gov.uk

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

Local members: none

Other members:

- Councillor Y Dahmash
- Councillor P Williams
- Councillor C Davies
- Councillor J Chilvers
- Councillor D Skinner