

CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE

1ST SEPTEMBER 2020

CHILDREN AND FAMILY WELLBEING SERVICE

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the progress of the Children and Family Wellbeing Service (CFWS) which was established in April 2019.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

2. The Early Help Review in 2018 led to the Children's Centre Service, Supporting Leicestershire Families Service (SLF), Youth Offending Service, and Early Help Information and Assessment Service being amalgamated and formed into one Children and Family Wellbeing Service. The review also resulted in Children's Centre buildings being reduced from 36 to 21.
3. The plan to transform Targeted Early Help services was agreed by the Cabinet in July 2018, and the new service was launched in April 2019.

Background

4. The Children and Family Wellbeing Service was introduced as a result of an organisational review of targeted early help services in 2018/19. The review of early help services was driven by the need to achieve £15m savings as part of the medium-term financial strategy (MTFS) and impending loss of National Troubled Families grant funding.
5. In 2017 an evaluation project was undertaken in relation to Early Help services which involved analysis of 787 cases opened to the Supporting Leicestershire Families and the Children's Centre Service over a 4-year period. The findings were extremely positive as detailed in the following paragraphs.
6. It was found that 68% of families had involvement with social care prior to SLF intensive support, and this decreased to 33% of families after the case was closed to SLF intensive support workers.

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7. In terms of the positive impact early help support can have on families, a family star tool, which monitors progress of families receiving one-to-one support from key workers is undertaken. Progress is charted across ten domains and families made most significant positive progress in improving boundaries and behaviour (72%), adult wellbeing (70%), social networks (65%), children's emotional needs (64%).
 8. In relation to performance against national benchmarks, national Troubled Families Project funding is allocated to individual projects based on the amount of families reaching positive outcomes. The results in Leicestershire were based on the performance of intensive family support within the SLF service. At the time of the evaluation project Leicestershire was a high performing Payment by Result (PBR) local authority. During the final stages of the Early Help Review in 2018 Leicestershire had delivered positive outcomes for 1596 families, which equated to 58% of the Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government (MHCLG) target of 2770 families which was well ahead of both regional and national averages.

The Early Help Review

9. Feedback from the Early Help Review public consultation in 2018 led to subsequent service changes focusing on drawing together support work across the four internal targeted early help service areas. Fundamental to this approach was the need, which was based on research, to preserve intensive family support. A key objective of the review was to place the needs of families at the centre of restructuring services and the feedback from the public consultation favoured services being linked into and delivered with other local early help related services. This in turn led to services being restructured and teams being introduced across five localities; Hinckley and Bosworth, Blaby Oadby and Wigston, North West Leicester, Charnwood, and Market Harborough and Melton.
10. To support a family centred approach to providing support to families, a number of roles were reshaped to provide a platform for practitioners to work with and support parents and children across the age range from 0 to 19 years of age. Where more specialist areas of work remained, staff were brought together across each of the localities into multi skilled teams.
11. Alongside this change a revised triage and assessment process was introduced. The change brought together all incoming referrals from across the four amalgamated services. This provided an opportunity to improve the triage process and enable locality teams to allocate the most appropriate support worker based on the needs of children or key family members. Introducing a new triage process was a significant challenge. Allocation of work to newly formed teams containing new and revised roles initially built some delay in the allocation of referrals. This was identified as a risk and plans were developed to streamline the allocation process.
12. To enable this significant change of approach a workforce development plan was introduced. Prior to the changes early help responses tended to be focused on the age of children, with children's centre staff focusing on parents with children aged 0 to 2 years, SLF focused on older aged children, and youth work focused on working with young people, often with little prior assessment of broader family needs.

13. Guidance and training were tailored for both staff who moved into the generic roles, and to those staff who remained in a similar role but moved to work within a multi skilled generic team.
14. A feature of the changes introduced in April 2019 is that multi skilled teams are able to provide a broad variety of support to families. The locality teams include Keyworkers who provide 1 to 1 intensive support to families for up to 12 months , Family Wellbeing Workers who undertake briefer periods of support based on child and family needs, Youth Workers who provide 1 to 1 support over 12 sessions to young people encountering relationship, emotional, or behavioural difficulties, Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) workers who undertake assessments to provide packages of support for children with special educational needs or disabilities, and qualified Wellbeing practitioners who provide support to children suffering from anxiety but fall below the threshold for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) support.
15. In addition to the support provided by practitioners the Children and Family Wellbeing Service also co-ordinates a broad variety of group related programmes for young people and families. The programmes can be introduced and based on the needs of families and young people but include domestic abuse and parenting centred programmes, youth support groups, and a young carers group.

The impact of the Children and Family Wellbeing Service

16. To give some indication of the impact of early help support, information has been introduced from three sources. Firstly, data on cases dealt with by the CFWS which includes overall numbers of cases open to the service, and data on the progress of cases dealt with by keyworkers undertaking intensive family support (appendix A). Secondly, feedback from families on the quality of the service they received, captured on case closure (appendix B). Thirdly, from an overview of the Leicestershire performance in relation to meeting national Troubled Families targets.
17. There are currently some difficulties with providing accurate early help related data, and therefore comparing data pre and post review can only be provided as a guide. Notably the review led to revised team structures introducing some new roles post review which did not appear in the pre review structure, and additionally the way in which individual and family numbers were counted altered slightly between 2018/19 and 2019/20.
18. Having highlighted the difficulties it is of note that the total number of individuals worked with by the CFWS post review in 2019/20 (7,114) was similar to the total number of individuals worked with pre review in 2018/19 (7,020). The total number of families open to the service over the same period fell from 3,285 in 2018/19 to 2,733 families in 2019/20. Some of this can be accounted for by changes in recording practices. However, the fall in numbers of families rather than individuals worked with may also relate to revised working practices and variety of practitioner roles available within each locality. In the new service it has become easier to undertake briefer forms of intervention through family wellbeing workers or youth workers where needs of the child or family are identified as being less complex.

19. In terms of the positive impact CFWS support can have on families, a family star assessment which monitors progress is undertaken with families receiving 1 to 1 support from Keyworkers. Progress is charted across 10 domains as previously highlighted.
20. The results remain encouraging and are similar to the findings of the evaluation project in 2017. At the end of 2019/20, 69% of families receiving intensive family support cases were showing positive progress across at least three of the domains of the family star assessment.
21. In March 2020 the CFWS was successful in achieving 100% of the payment by results target set by the government. The target for each family is reached if families achieve significant progress and/or achieved continuous employment. The ambitious target of 2,770 families was set at the start of phase 2 of the Troubled Families Unit programme. Due to the success seen at a national level the programme was extended for a further year, with a new local target being set of 464 families. Whilst there will be some challenges in the year ahead in terms of reaching educational and employment outcomes in this difficult financial environment, the service is confident that families will continue to receive the support they need to achieve sustained and significant outcomes. It is of note that the national troubled families programme, and associated funding, is currently due to end in 2021.
22. In terms of assessing the quality of service children and families receive, at the conclusion of work between families and the CFWS a case closure form is completed which captures feedback from families. In September 2019 an audit was undertaken of 40 case closure summaries randomly selected from a list of 79 undertaken during the year (see Appendix B). The closure summary asks families a series of questions concerning the service they received and concludes by asking for an overall rating of service. Of this sample 95% rated the service they received as good (22%) or excellent (73%). The positive findings were in line with feedback received from a deep dive case audit, which involves a detailed analysis of the quality of CFWS case work with families. The last audit during 2019 involved the review of 25 cases. 89% of the 18 families who responded stated that the worker listened to the point of view of the child, 89% also said that the worker had involved them in the planning, and 78% stated they received the help they needed.

CFWS response to COVID

23. The service has tried to minimise the impact of COVID in relation to the support for children and families. Contact has been risk assessed and face to face contact has been maintained where there have been significant worries or concerns. In all other cases open to individual workers, contact has continued via telephone or other digital platforms. Group work and the 0 to 5 Pathway have been halted in their normal format. Contact has been maintained with families awaiting programmes, and group work and learning materials have been provided where families can communicate in this way. It is anticipated that the demand for service could raise significantly when schools return after the school holidays.

Priorities and areas for development

24. The structural and role changes along with the move to a locality-based model led to the need to change the triage and allocation of early help cases. During the initial period of the changes the turnaround times from the receipt of referrals to the allocation work were inconsistent and often slow. This was picked up in the feedback from the Ofsted inspection of children's social care in 2019. As a part of the inspection Ofsted reviewed early help cases opened between the March and September 2019 shortly after the implementation of changes.
25. In order to improve the timeliness of allocation of work the triage process within CFWS was revised. Notably the decision-making process around CFWS triage was streamlined along with the allocation process within localities. The data relating to unassigned work waiting for allocation is provided at Appendix A. The break in data from December 2019 was due to improvements being made to the data by introducing unassigned work as an automated management report forwarded to CFWS managers on a weekly basis.
26. A snapshot of unassigned work awaiting allocation is recorded on one day each week. The level of work awaiting allocation was particularly high during the first three months of the introduction of the CFWS in May, June, and July 2019. Levels of unassigned work began to fall from August 2019, and there have been more significant reductions from March 2020 after changes to the triage process came fully into effect in February 2020.
27. The CFWS offers a variety of early support services and it was highlighted during the Early Help Review that developments were needed to improve the performance and outcome data linked to early help support. Work has been ongoing to improve the recording and analysis of CFWS activity. Areas being developed include, the ability to analyse CFWS data linked to the families primarily presenting need, capturing data on the development benchmarks for children aged 0 to 2 years, providing better data in relation to the outcomes of children stepped up and stepped down between statutory social work and targeted early help support, and introducing data on education outcomes.
28. The CFWS is currently undertaking a multi-agency early help system review with a number of stakeholder agencies to inform a partnership co-ordinated plan. The review has highlighted areas for developing and co-ordinating early help support across agencies involved in early support, including schools. The feedback highlighted a strong view that agencies providing early help support across Leicestershire need to improve collaborative working practices. Key areas for development are the need for greater collaboration in the governance of co-ordinated early help arrangements, more effective sharing of early help data across agencies, and the need for a shared case management systems and assessments.

Resource Implications

29. There are no current resource implications.

30. The Children and Family Wellbeing Service was introduced in April 2019. The focus of the service has been providing tailored support services to families with children aged 0 to 19 years of age, through multi skilled teams working closely with partner agencies across five localities. The Ofsted inspection highlighted that the CFWS offers a broad variety of early help services to families and was positive around work undertaken with partner agencies.
31. The national troubled families funding has been used in Leicestershire to fund the keyworker support provided to families encountering significant difficulties. The funding is due to end in 2021 which was one of the driving factors behind the Early Help Review in 2018. The one to one support provided by keyworkers was preserved from the SLF Service in the new CFWS arrangements based on the positive findings from the evaluation project. It is of note that the family star data which monitors progress of families allocated a keyworker remains extremely positive.
32. Finally, in relation to the impact of the new CFWS from the perspective of service users the feedback from families in relation to the quality of service remains very positive, with 95% of families rating the service they receive as good or excellent at the point of case closure.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

33. There are no alert procedures

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List of Appendices

Appendix A – Children and Family Wellbeing Service performance related data

Appendix B – Children and Family Wellbeing Service feedback from service users from 40 case closure summaries

Equalities and Human Rights Implications

34. There are no current EHRIA implications. A full EHRIA was conducted during as a part of the Early Help Review in 2018.

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