

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: JOINT LIFELONG LEARNING AND SOCIAL &
HEALTH CARE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE

DATE: THURSDAY, 21 MARCH 2013

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF LIFELONG LEARNING AND
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

SUBJECT: FAMILIES FIRST

1.00 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.01 To inform Members of the progress and ongoing development of the Families First Programme and the transition from the Cymorth Programme to the Families First Programme which is now completed.

2.00 BACKGROUND

2.01 The Welsh Assembly Government aspires to the eradication of child poverty by 2020. This aspiration is a fundamental element of its Social Justice Policy and is also part of the key priorities in the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. (UNCRC).

2.02 The Children and Family Measure which was given Royal Assent in 2010 places a duty on all public bodies in Wales to develop a strategy to tackle child poverty at a local level.

2.03 The Welsh Assembly Government published their Child Poverty Strategy in February 2011. This sets the National context and the Children and Young People's Plans which the local authority are legally required to develop and publish every three years set out the local context. The C.Y.P.P. plan "making a positive difference 2011-2014" and the Families First Plan and commissioning programme act as the vehicles to deliver the Child Poverty Strategy for Flintshire.

2.04 Both the National and Local plans which aim to tackle child poverty have the following strategic objectives:

1. To reduce the number of families living in workless households.
2. To improve the skills of parents/carers and young people living in low income households so they can secure well paid employment
3. To reduce the inequalities which exist in health, education and economic outcomes of children and families by improving the outcomes of the poorest.

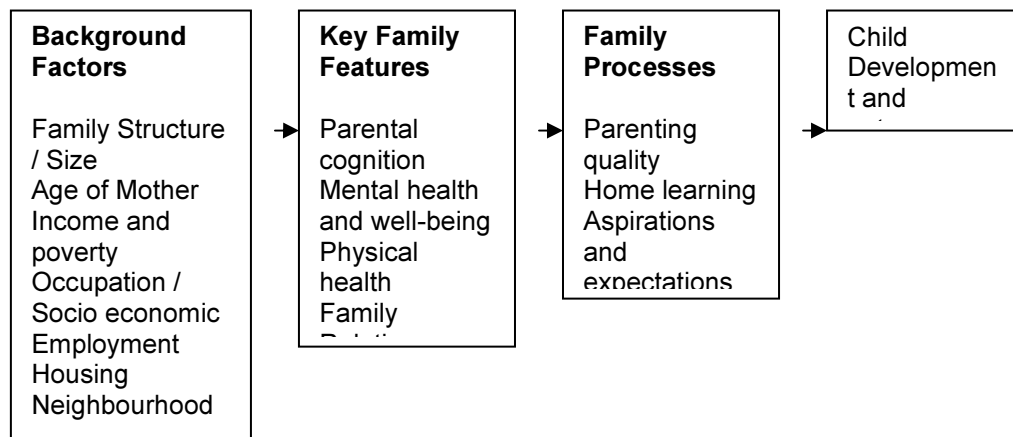
There is an expectation that all service areas will contribute to the eradication of child poverty. The service areas and the newly

commissioned Families First Programme will all work to contribute to the National Families First Outcomes. The four National outcomes for Families First have been agreed as:

1. Working age people in low income families gain, and progress within employment.
2. Children, young people and families in or at risk of poverty achieve their potential
3. Children, young people and families are healthy, safe and enjoy wellbeing
4. Families are confident, nurturing and resilient

All projects have been commissioned in line with the above outcome requirements.

- 2.05 In the Strategy, poverty is defined as a long term state of not having sufficient resources to afford food, reasonable living conditions or amenities or to participate in activities (such as access to attractive neighbourhoods and open spaces) that are taken for granted by others in their society.
- 2.06 Children’s life chances are influenced by the experiences and circumstances that they are exposed to from before birth and throughout their childhood. There are a range of factors that can impact on outcomes for children, for example:



‘A Model of the Inter-Generational Transmission of Educational Success’
Feinstein, Duckworth and Sabates (2004)

- 2.07 Low income and living in a workless household are key factors associated with poor outcomes for children. Evidence demonstrates that income mediates with other factors that affect child development such as parental

education and the home learning environment and therefore low-income children experience poorer environments in terms of factors that would otherwise promote their cognitive, social and health development. They are more likely to begin school with deficits in their learning ability and social behaviour. As a result, they progress more slowly than their more affluent peers and achieve fewer qualifications, even in circumstances in which schools serve all learners equally.

2.08 We also know that differences for children as a result of poverty begin to show themselves at a very early age. Differences in cognitive ability as a result of parental background show themselves from as early as three years of age. It also shows that social class gaps in attainment open early, and continue to widen as children get older.

2.09 The Welsh Assembly Government has made increasing family prosperity a priority as this is a necessary condition for improving outcomes for children and families. However, family prosperity alone is not sufficient. Public Services, Communities, the third sector and the faith sector paid staff and volunteers all have a vital role to play in shaping the life chances of children and adding value to the service delivery of universal services.

2.10 The following priorities have been identified as the main focus for reducing inequalities:

- The early years are fundamental to children's development
- We need to address the needs of families as well as the needs of the child
- That building resilience is critical because prevention is more effective than cure
- Schools should be focused on literacy, numeracy and breaking the link between educational attainment and poverty
- We must raise aspirations and maintain a ladder of opportunity for young people
- Working together with local partnerships

Children grow up in families. Better outcomes for children and tackling inequalities means supporting the whole family in a holistic and preventative manner. e.g. the Team Around The Family approach.

3.00 CONSIDERATIONS

3.01 Families do not come in neat packages, and they do not have identical needs. Accordingly, that variety of needs cannot always be met through one size fits all solutions. Rather, children and families often require a broad range of help and support, pitched at different levels by various service providers, throughout life.

3.02 There is emerging consensus, and evidence from Flying Start, that the best way of supporting families, particularly those families in poverty, is through an integrated, whole family approach. This means that national policy and local services must be designed or reconfigured to ensure effective and efficient delivery.

- 3.03 A clear message of the new policies and programme is that a whole family's approach built around integrated service to provide holistic support to children and families at every level of need is the way forward.
- 3.04 In July 2010 the Minister of Children announced the launch of a new programme named Families First. The programme aims are to build on best practice in the development of integrated service models to deliver preventative and early intervention approaches. Central to this approach are the following:-
- Placing the family at the centre and tailoring services to their needs
 - Providing a continuum of support, including a focus on the integration of universal services and targeted services
- Targeting those families most in need i.e. .Our most vulnerable families.
- 3.05 In August 2010 the Welsh Assembly Government appointed two pioneer consortia projects. One in South Wales involving Rhondda Cynon Taff, Blaenau Gwent and Merthyr Tydfil. The North Wales pioneer included Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham.
- 3.06 Wrexham have been the named lead partner and had responsibility for leading the collaboration across the three authority areas. This has provided an opportunity to:
- Work collaboratively in planning and recruitment issues
 - Share learning across the three partner authorities and with the Southern Consortium via learning sets
 - Share notable practice and share the development of developing new initiatives e.g. common approaches to vulnerable families mapping exercise
 - Work collaboratively to identify and share training and development needs for the consortia
 - Develop a workforce strategy collaboratively across the consortia and engage in participation approaches
- Host conferences and events to publicise the Families First programme and report on the end of pioneer area in a report.
- 3.07 Families First was developed under four work streams:
1. **Home/Learning/Money**
 - Development of opportunities for parents through training, volunteering, education
 - Improving parents skills in preparation for employment.
 - Increasing access to advice and information about employment, benefits, tax credits, reducing debt, money management, housing issues
 2. **Team Around the Family (Integrated Services and Parenting)**
 - Development of a Common Assessment to assess the needs of families. This is now fully effective in Flintshire having supported 100 families in year one.

- Train staff/volunteers in the use of the assessment process and ensure that this training is ongoing and available bilingually
- Train staff/volunteers to be a point of information for families by equipping them with a toolkit and training on how to utilise this
- Train staff/volunteers to act as a point of referral on to other services
- Promote the use of the Family Information Service, Quest and the Welfare Rights service.

3. Community Conferences

- Facilitate Community Conferences as a way to enable communities to address issues which cause problems for families who live there.

4. Transition from Cymorth to Families First

- Working with partner authorities was developed an approach to commissioning / decommissioning services which were traditionally funded through the Cymorth Programme as the Cymorth Programme will cease and the Families First full programme will commence by 1st April 2012. All strategic projects were commissioned and in delivery mode by 1st October 2012.

The full programme has now been commissioned in Flintshire. The Families First Board advertised the specifications on the Sell to Wales Website and held a public buyers event in June 2011. This led to a tendering process supported by the F.C.C. procurement team. The Board advertised twelve separate specifications which were all bid for and secured. The full programme is now effective and in delivery mode. The collaborative approach of this programme is already demonstrating positive measurable outcomes.

- 3.08 The Family and Adolescent Support Team (FAST) within the Directorate of Community Services (Children's Social Services) also provide a range of family centred interventions. These include parenting groups, family care and support arrangements and the provision of direct work to those children on the child protection register.

It should be noted that the third work stream of Families First (community conferencing) operates under the umbrella of the FAST service.

- 3.09 In July 2011 the Welsh Government issued new guidance for the roll out of Families First across Wales. The guidance required each local authority to submit a draft plan by the 28th October 2011. This plan was submitted and approved by Welsh Government and a refreshed update of the plan has been submitted in December 2012. Welsh Government has indicated that the updated Flintshire Families First Plan is approved for roll out in April 2013.

- 3.10 A key element of the Families First plan has been the development of the Team Around the Family (TAF) development. The TAF team have been in place for one year since 1st March 2012. The team have supported over 100 families and worked with local services and support to coordinate a

holistic whole family support approach via the implementation of TAF meetings and interventions for our most vulnerable families. Since 1st March 2013 the TAF team are now delivering a bilingual service and targeting this new service to our Welsh medium providers.

- 3.11 The Flintshire Families First Plan now focuses on the National Outcomes as described in **2.04** above , and the following local workstreams areas :-
- Vulnerable young people
 - Family wellbeing
 - Family support
 - Family home, learning and money

Work has taken place to evidence the approaches of service delivery that work best in these areas of need. In addition population data has been gathered and analysed to demonstrate the current position regarding our most vulnerable families. This body of evidence and data has informed the development of the tendering process for the commissioning of the full Families First programme to deliver the broader Flintshire Families First Plan and the commissioned projects.

4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.01 That Members accept this report for information and engage in the process of developing and supporting the plan when the opportunity is offered.

5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.01 The Families First Programme was funded by an additional specific grant from the Welsh Assembly Government initially for 2011-2012. During 2011-2012 service provision funded through the Cymorth Grant was re commissioned or decommissioned in line with the criteria for the Families First Programme. The funding has since been extended until March 2014 under which the new Families First Programme is funded

6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT

- 6.01 The aim of the whole Families First Programme is to mitigate against the effects of poverty on the outcomes for children young people and families.

7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- 7.01 None arising from this report.

8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 8.01 The Families First Programme aims to reduce inequalities as defined in the Child Poverty Strategy 2011.

9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.01 Posts previously funded by the Cymorth Grant were potentially at risk in March 2012. Some projects were not successful in the tendering exercise. The extended Families First funding is now secured until March 2014 and Welsh Government have indicated that they will confirm the further continuation of this programme for a further three years depending on evaluation and evidence of outcomes for families.

10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED

10.01 This is a multi-agency plan and so members of the public and other stakeholders have been engaged during the planning process in accordance with the Flintshire Participation Strategy. The plan was developed with a high level of stakeholder engagement which included 3rd sector, elected members, families, children and young people.

11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

11.01 Members of the public and other stakeholders have been engaged during the planning process.

12.00 APPENDICES

12.01 None.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

1. Children Act 2004
2. Child Poverty Strategy 2011
3. Families First Guidance
4. Shared Planning for Better Outcomes
5. Duty to Cooperate
6. Childcare Act 2006
7. Flintshire Families First Plan December 2012.

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