

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: **JOINT EDUCATION AND YOUTH AND SOCIAL AND HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

DATE: **4TH JUNE 2015**

REPORT BY: **NEIL AYLING, CHIEF OFFICER SOCIAL SERVICES**

SUBJECT: **UPDATE ON EARLY YEARS AND FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICE.**

1.00 PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide Scrutiny with an updated report in relation to the work to support children and families provided by the Early Years and Family Support Service in Flintshire.

2.00 BACKGROUND

International evidence indicates that intensive intervention in the early years can make a real difference to outcomes for children and their families in the longer term. As a result, the Welsh Government, Flintshire County Council and its partners have established and developed a wide range of programmes, services and support to focus on the needs of families, especially those who are at risk of poor outcomes.

In partnership with a range of organisations, Flintshire delivers a number of early years and family support services including Families First funded programmes (Parenting Strategy, Family Information Service, Quest, Y Teulu Cyfan), core and grant funded programmes (Community Parents, Breastfeeding Project), Family Centres and Flying Start.

As noted above, in addition to the fact that we recognise the need to work intensively with families who are vulnerable or at risk of poor outcomes, all of these areas of work are based on the principle that we need to provide a and progressive approach that pays particular attention to key points in the lives of families; to focus on enabling independence and removing reliance on support service and to build upon a family's capacity to help themselves; an integrated early support across the ages and stages.

2.01 The **Flintshire Parenting Strategy** project is funded through Families First. The project is supported by 2 staff and ensures that there is an identified individual ("parenting champion") and multi-agency group leading locally on parenting support and local and national parenting strategy and policy. The multi-agency group are charged with formulating annual plans to collectively contribute to the outcomes of the Families First programme and other related

programmes including Flying Start; strengthening parenting across all communities through information, support, advice and the offer of intervention and delivery of parenting provision. The work is relevant to parents and families, ensuring a co-ordinated and joined-up approach. The work of the project has achieved the following advantages:

- 2.02 There is an increase in the availability and access to an agreed offer of evidence-based parenting programmes by a variety of services across Flintshire, with increased collaboration and consistency through membership and work of the multi-agency strategic groups;
- 2.03 The work is based on 'what works' through a review of published research, studies and in collaboration with Welsh Government and national Parenting Coordinators Group and regional Families First Parenting Learning Set providing a strategic, coordinated approach.
- 2.04 Focus has been given to 'active' facilitators to develop implementation through precise targeting of family based programmes; identification and referral; engagement; practitioner skill; delivering programmes as intended; and the strategic infrastructure to ensure the delivery of effective programmes that transform lives, through a coordinated approach.
- 2.05 It has been agreed that a standardised tool, as a minimum, measuring parental wellbeing, will be used by all services delivering programmes. The use of this tool has enabled Flintshire to capture the majority of programme delivery, and by whom, with increased targeting and signposting. Staff trained in parenting programme delivery are supported in developing their skills for the achievement of good outcomes.
- 2.06 The **Family Information Service** Flintshire is a statutory function of the Local Authority, acting as a central information point supporting parents, prospective parents and carers of 0 - 20 year olds looking for information and advice about childcare, children's activities and family support and how to access these resources and services. It is also an initial point of contact for services supporting families.
- 2.07 The core service is operated by 4 team members based at the Westwood Centre, Tabernacle Street, Buckley, but operates via numerous outreach events and locations to ensure whole county coverage. Outreach work is also undertaken by a member of staff based at the Gronant Rural North Family Centre and a further shared post (with Wrexham CBC) funded by the Big Lottery, to support young parents up to the age of 25 with their information needs.
- 2.08 A Childcare Brokerage Officer is also jointly funded by Families First to work across Wrexham and Flintshire and provides a support service for families with disabled children to obtain suitable childcare and to support childcare providers with this objective in mind. Dealing with 26,000 enquiries every year, the Family Information Service can be accessed through a variety of media including telephone, e-mail, face to face and online at

www.fisflintshire.co.uk and www.flintshire.gov.uk which also provides online search facilities for users to undertake their own childcare and family support information searches. The Services also provided the County Childcare Sufficiency Assessment three year review and annual refresh.

- 2.09 The **Quest Project** works with parents who are not active within the labour market to provide intensive support in order to improve confidence, self-esteem, skills, qualifications and aspirations so that they can overcome the barriers that are preventing them from achieving paid employment. It is funded through Families First.
- 2.10 In 2014-15, 129 participants received one to one support through the project which resulted in the development and reviewing of a personal development plan to meet their needs. Each participant was offered a bespoke package of opportunities to meet their individual needs, resulting in: 66 participants being offered a Life Works (Confidence) Course, of which 49 started with 26 participants completing improved confidence and moving forward. Additional parents received support through other means.
- 2.11 45 received childcare support (to enable attendance at various courses that met their needs and enabled progression).
40 received transport support (to enable attendance at various courses that met their needs and enabled progression).
34 completed an Employability and Personal Development (level 1 accredited through City and Guilds).
18 regularly attended Progress Sessions.
34 attended Essential Skills (on-going) (Accredited through Edexcel).
82 entered training following intervention.
81 were referred to other agencies (inc FF projects).
In addition, it is known that other participants entered volunteering opportunities and enrolled/ started at college.

Until September 2014 Quest had a partner project **Novus** funded through European funding. The project supported 113 parents, of these 22 gained employment, 23 went into further learning, 24 gained a qualification and 52 gained other positive outcomes.

- 2.12 Working as part of the North Wales Economic Ambitions Board, Flintshire County Council is in the process of developing a submission for the new round of European Social Funding for 2014-2020 under the theme of "Unemployed and Economically Inactive (Priority 1)" which concentrates on skills and employment and tackling poverty. The specific objective will be to increase the employability of economically inactive and long term unemployed aged 25 and over who are not in education or training who have complex barriers to employment such as low or no skills, work limiting health conditions, disability, care or childcare responsibilities.
- 2.13 A detailed business plan as part of the proposal for the emerging **OPUS** project continues to be developed following initial approval of a "logic table" submitted to the European Office responsible for making funding decisions at

the later stage of the process. The Quest Coordinator is currently undertaking this lead for Flintshire working in partnership with other key stakeholders, Wrexham Borough Council and regional partners.

- 2.14 The **Y Teulu Cyfan (The Whole Family)** project is funded through Families First. They support families who have been referred to Team Around the Family, and other prevention and early intervention services. They use a 'whole family' approach for parents and carers with children up to 18 years of age. They are working with families of varying ages and relationships including grandparents, siblings, separated parents and the numbers of individuals they have worked with compared to the number of families reflect this. Some of the sessions are more intensive than others.
- 2.15 Referrals are now coming in frequently and demand is often higher than their capacity. Families that will be required to wait for a service are contacted and will receive a visit to ensure they receive support and a familiar contact whilst waiting for provision. Verbal feedback from the families that they are working with has been very positive and the proactive approach of the team to work with the whole family has been a success for the families they support. Due to the nature of working with the whole family, with various levels of need, the level of support offered through childcare placements, transport and safety equipment has varied. They will only source this when other avenues have been explored and in an emergency situation. As a team they are working to capacity with individual families. They are also one of the services who offer parenting programmes across Flintshire.
- 2.16 During 2014-15 161 families and 512 individuals received a package of support with 30 families receiving home safety equipment. Of these, 100% have reported that they feel better able to cope, report an improvement in their family situation/circumstance, have increased financial literacy as a result of support, feel more resilient and able to tackle common barriers to development and are participating in community that were not before. 98% of families felt equipped with tools to improve situations, reducing the need for higher threshold interventions.
- 2.17 **Flintshire Community Parents** is a voluntary organisation based at the Westwood Centre in Buckley. The project has been working with families since 2001 providing friendly and informal support to parents on a one to one basis. Home visits are agreed on a regular basis with the aim of promoting health and wellbeing for the whole family through individualised support. All volunteers are parents, and they have to undertake accredited training at Level 2 and commit to 3 – 5 hours per week volunteering. Many of the volunteers have been beneficiaries of the service, then become volunteers, and then move into paid employment. The project aims to maintain 15 'active' volunteers per year, and currently has 16 active, from 27 registered. The project is funded through core funding and a variety of grants. The project has held the 'Investing in Volunteers' quality mark since 2011 in recognition of the volunteers receiving the highest quality experience.

2.18 Another volunteer project within the service providing support to mothers who are considering breastfeeding and would like more information, need some help from a qualified Peer Support and would like to meet other likeminded mums is the **Flintshire Breastfeeding Project**. Groups are run throughout the week, in Breastfeeding friendly buildings. Breastfeeding Peer Support Volunteers are an essential element of the service, providing quality support to mothers at groups and one to one in the home. All volunteers receive comprehensive training which is accredited by Agored Cymru. The project aims to maintain 10 active peer supporters, and currently has 12. Research suggests that breastfeeding provides a measure of protection against breast cancer, ovarian cancer and weak bones later in life. It can reduce the risk of serious illness, development of allergies, obesity and improve intelligence for babies, supporting the child's development.

2.19 There are two **Family Centres** in Flintshire, one in Buckley and the second in Gronant.

The Westwood Centre is situated next to the Westwood Primary School and is a family orientated hub of activity and resources centred around the numerous services offered by the teams who are based there, or who visit regularly to run courses and clubs, or to hold events.

The teams operating from or based within the Centre include the Parenting Strategy Unit, The Family Information Service, Chatterbox Playtimes, Community Parents, Flying Start, Early Entitlement, Foundation Phase, Sport Wales Jimmy Bear and Novus.

2.20 The Centre hosts numerous training events and meetings (including CAMHS counselling sessions and Child Contact sessions) in the two well-equipped training and additional meeting rooms and the school uses the Main Hall and the Play Room and Nursery for classes of children.

During the evenings and weekends, a variety of clubs ranging from dance to martial arts take place and the Centre is a popular after school club and holiday club venue. The various umbrella organisations operating across the county also use the Centre for a variety of training and information sessions. The Centre is easily accessible and has disabled access, alongside a kitchen area.

The Rural North Flintshire Family Centre in Gronant run a range of activities from the Centre including a pre-school playgroup, after school and holiday clubs plus activities to promote physical activity, mental wellbeing, skills development and support to gain employment. There is a well-equipped kitchen and outside space available to support all of the activity that takes place within the centre as a focus for community activity.

2.21 **Flying Start** is a prescriptive, Welsh Government funded programme, targeted at 0-3 year olds in the most disadvantaged communities in Wales. Families within Flying Start areas are able to access free, part-time quality

childcare, an enhanced Health service (including Health Visiting, Midwifery, Speech and Language), and access to Parenting Programmes and Speech, Language and Communication sessions

2.22 Expanding Flying Start is one of the top ‘Five for a Fairer Future’ manifesto commitments of the Welsh Government which will be met over a number of years to allow for the necessary infrastructure to be put in place, including the recruitment and training of additional health visitors; parenting development workers, advisory teachers and ‘speech, language and communication staff’. The phasing of the expansion will also enable the continued development of capital infrastructure, and in particular additional childcare settings, to deliver the programme in its new target areas.

2.23 The basis for this expansion has been agreed by Ministers and is to be linked to concentrations of 0-3 year olds living in income benefit households. This means that the expanded programme must be delivered in those areas with the highest proportion of 0-3 year olds living in income benefit households. The Welsh Government identify a “cap” for each year for Flying Start. This represents the number of children that can be supported by Flying Start at any point in time. During a year, some children will move into generic health when they reach the age of 4 years, enabling the Flying Start team to then work with new families and children. In 2015/16 the cap has been increased as part of the expansion, to 1407 children. The number of children who have received Flying Start Services and face to face contact over the last 3 years is as follows:

Year	Total number supported/in contact	“Cap” for that year
2012/13	954	743
2013/14	1238	1078
2014/15	1515	1274
n.b. these numbers exclude antenatal contacts and children age 4 and over.		

3.00 CONSIDERATIONS

3.01 Following submission of an application under the category “Better Outcomes Through Working Together”, the Early Years and Family Support Service has been invited to the final of the Social Care Accolades Awards on the 18th June 2015 run by the Care Council for Wales.

3.02 Flintshire’s submission reflects the difference that a multi-agency approach can make to improving confidence in parenting skills, leading to a reduction in stress experienced by families in daily life, with increased wellbeing and improved relationships, and academic achievement and improved social skills for children.

Whilst the local authority must work within the criteria set for grant funded programmes, further work has and continues to take place to support children and families from across the County. An example is through the provision of “Incredible Years” training to Health Visitors and Health Assistants plus teaching assistants working right across Flintshire.

4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members consider, agree and endorse the ongoing developments of the Early Years and Family Support Service.

5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.01 There are no financial implications for Flintshire County Council resulting from the Flying Start Programme as a grant funded programme by the Welsh Government. The grant is administered by the local authority as the accountable body.

6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT

6.01 The aim of the Flying Start Programme is to mitigate against the effects of poverty on outcomes for children. The Flying Start Programme is a key feature of the Welsh Assembly Government’s Child Poverty Strategy. The pre-publication Flying Start Annex ‘Guidance on Speech, Language and Communication’, April 2015 states, ‘Well-developed speech, language and communication skills are fundamental to the ability to form and maintain social relationships with family, peers and friends and are essential for future learning in school. Language skills are a critical factor in the intergenerational cycles that can perpetuate poverty. This guidance provides the underpinning principles that should be used to develop Flying Start speech, language and communication services to support parents, families, children and all practitioners. This will ensure that all children are given the opportunities to develop their speech, language and communication skills to their full potential.

7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

7.01 No direct impact resulting from this report.

8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT

8.01 The Flying Start Programme aims to reduce inequalities as defined in the Child Poverty Strategy 2015. It is a programme of universal and targeted services which are delivered in target geographical areas. As the provision is universal at the point of delivery it is equitable for all families in areas included within the programme.

9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.01 In preparation for the expansion of Flying Start during 2015-2016 staff continue to be deployed in locality teams. The recent and planned expansion of the Flying Start Programme has required the recruitment of a number of new and additional staff members including a Speech and Language Therapist, Safeguarding Clinical Nurse (1.2 FTE), Midwife and a Project Support Officer to support the management of the revenue and capital and the necessary claims, as well as undertaking a review of Service Level Agreements and internal processes. The stringent controls relating to recruitment are proving challenging to the delivery of the programme and Welsh Government have notified Local Authorities that internal procedures should not prohibit the delivery of the approved Delivery Plan.

10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED

10.01 No requirement for consultation as a result of this report.

11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

11.01 No requirement for consultation as a result of this report.

12.00 APPENDICES

None.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

1. Welsh Government Flying Start Guidance 2012
2. Welsh Government Flying Start Guidance 2014 – Parenting
3. Welsh Government Flying Start Guidance 2015 – Health
4. Welsh Government Flying Start Guidance – Speech, Language and Communication
5. Flintshire Flying Start Service Delivery Plan 2015-2016

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