

30 January 2023

Locality Working & Family Hubs

Ward(s): All

Portfolios: Cllr Stacie Elson. Children's.

1 Aim

- To provide an overview of the progress to date and on-going planning for the blended 'hybrid ' model of delivery for the co-location of Children's Social Care, Early Help and key locality partners within the North, West, Central South and East Locality
- To provide an overview on the alignment to the Family Hub model and implementation

2 Recommendations

1. For the direction of travel to date to be supported and any suggested recommendations to be provided
2. To consider how overview and scrutiny committee can support in the further development of the locality model

3 Report detail- know

- 3.1 Walsall Right 4 Children (WR4C) transformation programme is driving the delivery of our children's vision, aimed at ensuring the right children are 'in the right place with the right support for as long as it's needed' so they are safe from harm, happy and learning well.

At the start of 2020 we set out our 5 key cross directorates priorities, driven by the evidence from our performance framework, Ofsted Improvement Plans and our 'Big Conversations' with children, young people and families.

One of these priorities was to

- co-locate teams across the 4 locality hubs

We know the benefits of delivering a community based model of working reduces the chances of poor outcomes for children, young people and their families by having a range of local services and support networks together, as well as building community capacity and community resilience by having the right support available at a local level and accessible at the earliest opportunity.

Within the whole WR4C partnership there are shared concern around poverty, domestic abuse, and other 'hidden harms,' the late presentation of need, a further widening of the education gap as well as the impact of social distancing on children's development and their mental and emotional health.

Locality working enables an opportunity for practitioners to connect with their local community by building "community capacity" enabling people to provide support and assistance for each other and generate solutions for locally prioritized issues.

Unfortunately shortly after the agreement for the locality based model was secured came the COVID 19 Pandemic, causing significant delay to the physical co-location of Social Workers, Early Help Practitioners and key partners, as well as introducing a layer of complexity which needed careful consideration. The development of services rooted in the communities where our families reside is essential given what we know in respect of the impact on families directly attributable to the pandemic and more recently the cost of living crisis, financial and economic climate.

3.2 Progress of physical co-location

West Locality: the first co-location opportunity came about in the West at the Darlaston Family Hub Illmington House, Crescent Road, Wednesbury, Darlaston WS10 8AE .

It was agreed to pilot the West locality to help inform the model further and to introduce a phased approach as follows:

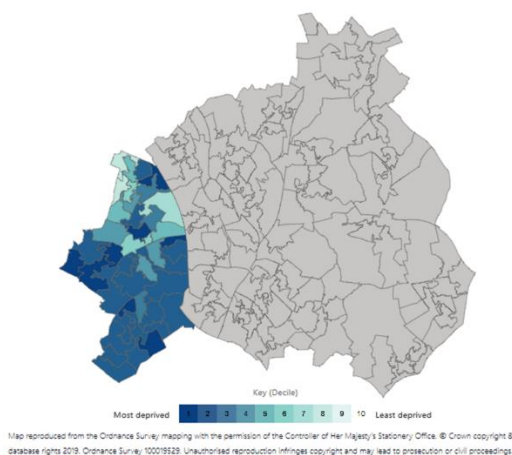
- 1st September 2021 - Children's Family Safeguarding Social Workers
- 6th September 2021- Early Help Practitioners and the CSC Duty and Assessment Teams
- 13th September 2021 onwards commenced the partnership focus which to date has secured co-location of School Nurses, Health Visitors, DWP Officers, Early Help Police Officers, Black Country Domestic Abuse Practitioners, Money, Home, Job colleagues, WHG colleagues.

The move to Darlaston was successful in that there was already a purpose built space which local families utilised and such supported the activity of the practitioners in their engagement with families.

Each locality area of Walsall needs to be understood in its own right. Whilst the overarching aim is to work to restorative principles across children's services and our key partners there needs to be nuanced understanding by practitioners of the areas they serve.

Within the West locality co-located partners and wider community partners have started working closer together to understand the needs of local families, we know and have shared together the West has the second highest rate of referrals into children's social care by 10,000 of the population. Domestic abuse is a problem for the West locality, this is evident in both Police, Children's Services and Black Country Women's Aid data. Parental mental health is also high at 29.8% (percentage of assessments where mental health was a factor) whereas childhood mental health is low at 1.9% (as a percentage factor for assessment) as is socially unacceptable behaviour.

West locality families are made up of a mixture of different households ranging from low income families with multiple children to older people living in inexpensive homes that they own. There are long-term social renters living in low value properties in this area which may include multi-storey flats in urban locations. There are small pockets within in this area where homes are owned by more mature adults where they are enjoying "empty-nest" status or where they have older children that still live at home, they tend to live in mid-range family homes in traditional.



North Locality: In August 2022 the North Locality co-location commenced, the former Children’s Centre could not accommodate the physical co-location so it was agreed to have a two centred approach within the North, utilising the existing Family Hub where Early Help and partners had been co-located previously to deliver bespoke and targeted support to children, young people and their families whilst having a co-located office environment for Social Workers, Early Help Practitioners and key partners, developing relationships in the spirit of cooperation colleagues worked together and were co-located in the office building of 275 Blakenhall Heath.

There then followed a series of disturbances and anti-social behaviour in the Blakenhall area. The locality office where practitioners were based is on the row of shops that were being targeted by local youths. The increase in tension in the area pre dated the arrival of the co-located model and was thought by local community workers to be an impact of the closures of schools and youth provision during Covid 19 pandemic.

There was anxiety expressed by both social care staff and partners which resulted in a temporary leave of the building pending risk assessments being implemented and wider work being undertaken with the community as well as other building opportunities being considered, including an extension to the former children’s centre.

There is now a ‘Multi-agency North Locality Working Group’ set up, including Children’s Social Care, Early Help, the Violence Reduction Partnership, the Police, Walsall Housing Group and Community Safety where there is a joined up approach to working with the local community in regard to anti-social behaviour. Significant progress has been made and there has been a reduction in anti-social behaviour alongside a decrease in referrals to the North Locality in regard to anti-social behaviour.

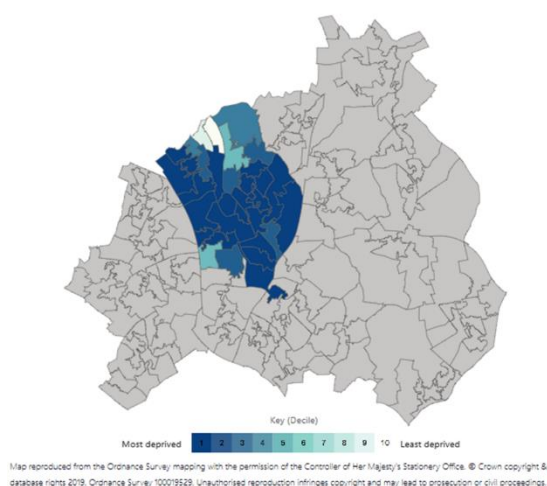
The former Children’s Centre has remained open however and has, thankfully, not been a target for the anti-social behaviour experienced within the high street. The centre continues to be staffed by the co-located partners and is delivering targeted and bespoke support to children, young people and their families.

Partners continue to work together however and have shared what is known, North locality is the most deprived locality in the borough. The North locality is mainly made up of low income families aged between 25-40 yrs with multiple children with little or no qualifications. Homes in this area are usually low cost and are often found in areas with fewer employment options. Transient renters who pay modest rents for low cost

homes are apparent in this area, they are mainly young people often only living in properties for short periods of time before moving on.

59,551 people live in the North – 20.9% of the Walsall population, of which 15,931 (26.8%) are aged 0-17 – 23.1% of all Walsall children. The North locality is the least populous, but has the highest proportion of children as a percentage of population, but the lowest percentage of children overall. This suggests that sibling groups are bigger in this area

The North locality receives the highest number of referrals into Children’s Social Care and Early Help despite having the lowest percentage of child population. Neglect and emotional abuse are a significant factor for assessments in the North locality.



Central/South Locality: In December 2022 the move to Central/South locality took place, the building is the former Birchills Children’s Centre on Birchills Street, WS2 8NF.

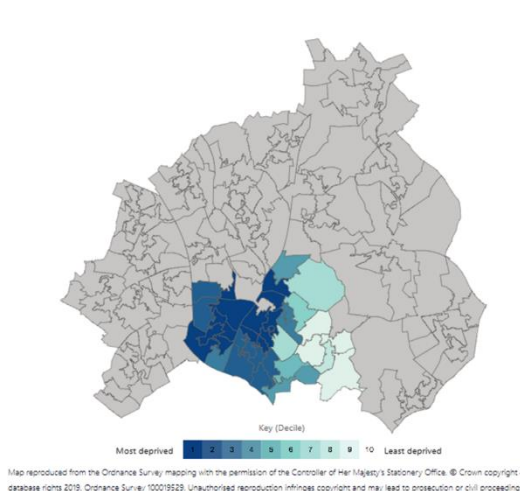
The building will be shared with Social Care, Early Help, partners and the Safeguarding and Review service. There has been a delay in this move due to concerns expressed around whether the current IT system could accommodate the 60 practitioners who will be using the building. Whilst there is not sufficient capacity to accommodate the entire service areas at all times and the nature of the work and demands can enable flexibility, the current issue is that the IT is at capacity when there are only 35 workers within the building. Currently the building is occupied by Children’ social workers, family safeguarding practitioners, Early Help and the academy and the safeguarding and review service. However owing to the IT issues not all staff can be in the office at any one time.

The building is ideally located by a fire station, school and Mosque. It is at the heart of the community and purpose built to undertake direct work with children and families. There is an outdoor space that can be creatively used in the summer months to support play with children and families.

Partners have started to work together to understand the local needs of families, what we do know is that 64,635 people live in the Central/South locality – this area has the joint highest proportion of children as a percentage of the population.

The locality has seen the greatest increase in referrals with a 13.9% increase in referrals leading to an assessment. There is an increasing demand to Children's Statutory Services in the South however the take up of Early Help is lower than in the other three localities. The Early Help service had formally been commissioned out, however this was brought back into the local authority in November 2021 and on-going work with the Early Help practitioners, local services and community leaders has commenced and needs further exploration in regard to the reasons for the low number of referrals into Early Help.

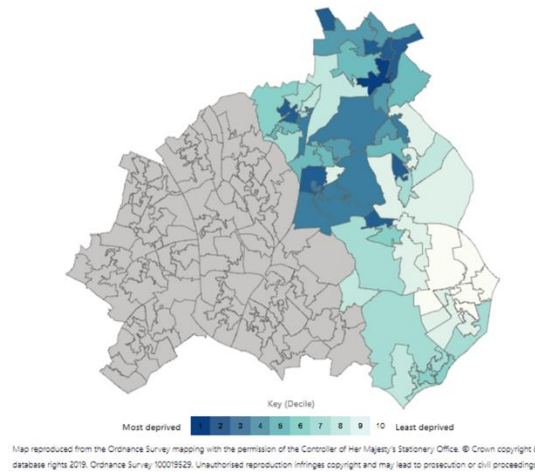
The increase of demand in South to CSC needs to be properly understood in order to ensure an appropriate offer of support to meeting the vulnerabilities of families residing in the South locality. This is a factor that is being reconsidered alongside the increase in demand.



East Locality: This remains the final locality to be opened. A building within Silver Court Brownhills has been identified and is currently being renovated. This has not stopped the building of relationships however with those to be co-located (it is recognised that without a physical location it does hinder but does not totally prevent) and partners are already being identified to be co-located within the East.

What we do know about the East locality is it is mainly made up of elderly homeowners or married couples with high value detached homes. There is more financial security in this locality and includes people who have children who have left home and those who have chosen to downsize to live among others of similar age and life style. There are pockets of areas that consist of spacious and prestigious homes in established residential areas.

The East is the smallest locality, almost 40 % of assessments in the East have domestic abuse as a factor, alcohol and substance misuse appear in higher proportions in the East alongside child mental health issues.



3.3 What's going well?

There are a number of area's of work going well, including relationships between practitioners in Early Help, CSC and key partners with School Nurses, Health Visitors, DWP, Black Country Women's Aid, Money, Home, Job, WHG, Police and the voluntary and community sector.

- Local services building networks – partners reporting feeling connected and involved
- Group supervision for children and young people and the ability to transfer learning from the Family Safeguarding model across the locality area
- Improved and improving relationships with voluntary and community sector
- Hearing about new initiatives through time to talk
- Starting to identify barriers and/or gaps in service provision against demand
- Delivery of a 'hybrid' parenting support offer, offering group work, one to one intervention and virtual training and support. Various groups taking place at Darlaston including Mellow Dads, Circle of security etc. ensuring flexibility to meet the needs of parents/carers, so delivery virtually, in the evenings and at weekends
- Developing an understanding of the local area, customs and practices. Practitioners are getting a sense of what it's like to be a family in the area and can better understand the cultural context
- Closer relationships with schools
- Connection to local 'hubs' for additional support for families
- Connectivity to the new Family Hub model and approach
- The introduction of the 'hub and spoke' model – where key community venues have been funded to work with and be part of the 'locality hub' offering their venues to partners working with children, young people and their families as well as offering the venues to have co-located meetings and opportunities to further strengthen partnerships and collaboration

The Early Help Partnership Time to Talk has become embedded in 3 of our 4 localities, with Central/South is now being focused on. This platform offers an opportunity for partners to come together in each locality to understand the issues faced and resources available to share information, connect local partners and consider the local offer and needs further. Themes discussed to date include:

- ❖ Understanding the Early Help demand for children, young people and their families
- ❖ CAMHS , demand and referral pathways

- ❖ Understanding of mental health needs
- ❖ WHG offer
- ❖ 'Walking in my shoes' presentation from social worker and voluntary sector
- ❖ Holiday Activity Fund (HAF)
- ❖ Hub & Spoke model
- ❖ School Nurses offer
- ❖ Understanding behaviour, behaviour and relationship policy
- ❖ VRU support for ASB/violent behaviour
- ❖ Young carers & the local offer
- ❖ Reducing Parental Conflict
- ❖ Domestic Abuse
- ❖ Early Help volunteer programme
- ❖ LGBTQ
- ❖ Family Safeguarding Model
- ❖ Launch of the Early Help, Domestic Abuse and Child Neglect Strategy

The Early Help Partnership launch of its 'outcomes framework' adopting the Government Supporting Families (Supporting Families Programme Guidance 2022 to 2025) 10 priority need categories to help us all identify the areas of support that families need which are:

1. Education
2. Early Years
3. Health
4. Drugs & Alcohol
5. Family Relationships
6. Abuse & Exploitation
7. Crime Prevention and Tackling Crime
8. Domestic Abuse
9. Secure Housing
10. Financial Stability

The outcome framework describes what we think would be a positive outcome for the families receiving help and support from the partnership , framed against each of the 10 priority needs.

Children's services launched the family safeguarding model in September 2020 which adopted a whole family approach to meeting the needs of children and their families. The emphasis across the partnership is adopting an approach to meeting the needs of families with an emphasis of working with the wider partnership and community.

3.4 Areas of Improvement

- Physical co-location has been significantly delayed due to the COVID pandemic, delay in physical building refurbishment and anti-social behaviour within the North locality, all of these are being addressed independently however has caused delay
- Opportunities to understand inter-dependencies could be better developed by easier access to data that supports this understanding. This will be further supported by the introduction and alignment with the Family Hub Model
- Space does not allow for full co-location however there is further opportunities for shared reflective spaces that support and align collective partnership thinking, again supported by the 'hub and spoke' model and will be further strengthened by Family Hubs

- There needs to be further development of the business support offer
- Further opportunities for collaboration and joint working to better understand how the wider partnership can collectively address local issues such as domestic abuse perpetrator commissioning for example
- Opportunity around providing mental health/emotional wellbeing support

3.5 Family Hubs Alignment

With the implementation of the Family Hubs across the borough this will further strengthen the support available for children, young people and their families along with the co-location and wider local offer for families within our localities. The Family Hub blue print is a system-wide model of providing high-quality, joined-up, whole-family support services. Hubs deliver these services from conception, through a child's early years until they reach the age of 19 (or 25 for young people with special educational needs and disabilities).

Family hubs aim to make a positive difference to parents, carers and their children by providing a mix of physical and virtual spaces, as well as outreach, where families can easily access non-judgmental support for the challenges they may be facing. Family Hubs will provide a universal 'front door' to families, offering a 'one-stop shop' of family support services across their social care, education, mental health and physical health needs, with a comprehensive Start for Life offer for parents and babies at its core.

The programme focuses on 6 specific areas of action and requires the wider partnership to commit to implementing these

1. Seamless support for families: a coherent joined-up Start for Life offer available to all families. The universal Start for Life offer should include the essential support that any new family might need: midwifery, health visiting, mental health support, infant-feeding advice and specialist breastfeeding support, safeguarding and services relating to SEND.
2. A welcoming hub for families: family hubs as a place for families to access Start for Life services. Services available physically, virtually and via outreach.
3. The information families need when they need it: designing digital, virtual and telephone offers around the needs of the family, including a digital child health record
4. An empowered Start for Life workforce: developing a modern, skilled workforce to meet the changing needs of families.
5. Continually improving the Start for Life offer: improving data, evaluation, outcomes and proportionate inspection.
6. Leadership for change: ensuring local and national accountability and building the economic case

Our localities Family Hub & Spoke approach and co-location of key partners and strengthen working together will be aligned.

4 Financial information

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|----------------------------------|---------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Original Budget | | | | | 72,780.00 |
| | | | | | |
| Spend as at December 2022 | CCTV £ | Card Access System £ | Non-Security works £ | Contribution from revenue £ | Total £ |
| Birchills | 7,995.00 | - | 11,731.64 | | 19,726.64 |
| Blakenhall | 4,995.00 | - | 30,475.74 | | 35,470.74 |
| Darlaston | - | 15,175.00 | 11,194.24 | | 26,369.24 |
| Silver Court | 4,995.00 | 11,829.00 | 27,404.74 | | 44,228.74 |
| Unallocated | - | - | 1,172.36 | (12,639.00) | - 11,466.64 |
| Total | 17,985.00 | 27,004.00 | 81,978.72 | (12,639.00) | 114,328.72 |
| | | | | | |
| Over Budget | | | | | 41,548.72 |

A number of factors including inflationary rises and scope change are thought to be contributors to the overspend.

There is currently work ongoing to determine exact causes of overspend and appropriate re-allocation to negate the overspend.

5 Reducing inequalities

The move to localities is an integral aspect of our transformation journey and enables a greater sense of connectivity between workers and the community with who they engage. By building “community capacity” – the ability of people to provide support and assistance for each other and generate solutions for locally prioritized issues. Communities with high community capacity have extensive networks of relationships through which reciprocity can flow and foster the kind of actions to influence whole systems. There is emerging examples of good partnership practices that can be shared across the system.

There are issues present in each locality- domestic abuse is the highest and most consistent factor for referral across all four localities. There has been an increase in referrals and assessments owing to parental mental health. There has also been an increase in child mental health in East and a rise in physical abuse in West, Central & South. Locality working enables a partnership approach to meeting the needs of the community.

The benefits and evidence of delivering a community based model of working reduces the chances of poor outcomes for children, young people and their families by having a range of local services and support networks together as well as building community capacity and community resilience by having the right support available at a local level and accessible at the earliest opportunity.

6 Decide

The WR4C transformation programme and Family Hub Model continues to be developed and will further strengthen the partnership, whilst there is no decision for

scrutiny to be made around the programmes, scrutiny are asked to support the direction of travel and endorse the achievements made so far.

7 Respond

There has been an increase in demand in West and South, there is further exploration and analysis needed to ensure that each locality is sufficiently resourced to meet the increase in demand that has shifted since the original data analysis was completed in 2019 that determined the resource for each locality area. The transformation journey pre dates the pandemic as it pre dates the cost of living crisis that will no doubt see many families struggle with poverty. There will be families who may not previously have come to the attention of statutory services who owing to the shift in landscape are facing unprecedented challenges to their health and wellbeing.

The North locality has seen increased stability in staffing across children's social care and Early Help. This stability has led to a 50% reduction in children where care proceedings are issued. There has also been a decrease in children made subject to child protection plans. There is however anxiety amongst practitioners in regard to the proposed return to the Blakenhall Office owing to the experiences of practitioners during the summer months which are being considered further.

8 Review



Performance conversations have become more meaningful owing to more in depth analysis of each locality area. This enables a more sophisticated level of discussion around the issues, demographics and needs of each locality that support system wide analysis leading to a greater understanding of what resources are needed to meet the demands of the children and families in line with our transformation objective of ensuring that children in Walsall have the best possible start and are safe from harm, happy and learning.



In order for families to benefit from the family safeguarding model and relaunched Early Help offer it is essential that we continue to use performance data and system intelligence to ensure that we are meeting our ambitious objective.

A review report to scrutiny will be scheduled for 12 months, detailing the achievements, barriers and further co-location and Family Hub model

Background papers
Early Help Strategy 2021- 2024

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