

11th December 2018

9.

Right for Children Transformation programme

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Cllr Tim Wilson, Children's and Health and Wellbeing

Executive Summary:

Since the launch Our Right 4 Children vision in September we have made significant progress delivering activities in our Transformation Programme which is intended to reduce the circumstances which lead to children requiring a statutory intervention whether this is related to keeping children safe with families, getting a child back into full time education or preventing a child from re-offending.

Four key areas of progress include:

Our partnership with the What Works Centre (WWC), a national organisation funded through the Department for Education, working with Children's Social Care in our quest to be an evidence-minded organisation.

October, saw the WWC undertake a diagnostic, informed by staff interviews, a staff survey, observations of team meetings, panel and practice improvement forums. This approach has helped us to reflect on current social work practice; the feedback report and recommendations is informing our next steps in improving the use of evidence, both strategically and operationally.

WWC and Children's Services continue to collaborate.

- **Our prevention work stream** is taking a whole system approach to redesigning and reorienting resources where there is evidence that it makes sense to do so—this in the interest of children and young people. This means aligning Children's Services resources to our locality arrangements (4 locality based teams) so that practitioners

- connect with the communities children, young people and families live in
- build stronger relationships with the people
- make better use of existing resources in communities
- develop a more strength based approach aimed at securing better sustainable outcomes for children and young people and their families.

We are seeking the views of our workforce and key stakeholders about these new ways of working throughout November and December

Our Restorative Practice work stream seeks to develop consistent and effective relationship based services and practice that inspires children, young people and their communities to shape their own futures, build resilience to face challenges and confidence to resolve problems.

To date we have trained over 200 members of staff across the directorate. Responsibility for sharing and embedding good practice and generating the collective energy and enthusiasm needed to deliver sustainable change in the way we work with families is being supported by 36 'restorative champions' .

A developing partnership with the private, voluntary and community sector to identify new and innovative solutions to respond to our challenges and achieve the best outcomes for children, young people and their families. Our Commissioning work stream, advised by procurement colleagues and supported by the Local Government Association is seeking to develop and test new ways to:

- provide more effective supported housing pathways for young people leaving our care or at risk of homelessness
- reducing the need for children to become looked after.

Reason for scrutiny:

To provide members with a progress update of our Right For Children' Transformation Programme.

Recommendations:

The report to be noted.

Background papers:

Scrutiny report presented on 25 September 2018.

Appendix 1 – What Works Centre Diagnostic November 2018.

Appendix 2 – Proposed Walsall Right 4Children operating Model

Resource and legal considerations:

Not applicable to this report

Council Corporate Plan Priorities:

The 'Right for Children' transformation programme will contribute to a number of our Council Corporate Plan Priorities:

1. People: The transformation programme will aim to work with children, young people and their families to ensure they have increase independence, improved health and can positively contribute to their communities.
2. Internal Focus: The programme is focussing on a whole system change to ensure that within Children's Services we are as efficient and effective as we can be.
3. Children: The main focus of the transformation programme is to ensure that support is in place so children can have the best start and are safe from harm, happy, health and learning well
4. Communities: Our transformation programme will connect with Walsall Communities and ensure that they are resilient with all housing needs for children and young people being met in safe and healthy places that build a strong sense of belonging and cohesion.

Citizen impact:

We will listen to children, young peoples and their family's current experiences and understand and learn from when services made a difference and when not. As the user of our service, they are best placed to tell us what it feels like to live in Walsall and in being in need of help and support. We have an ambition to work in true collaboration with children, young people and families to develop and deliver our transformation programme.

Environmental impact:

Not applicable for this report

Performance management:

Project governance of the 'Right for Children' transformation programme sits within the wider Transformation Programme arrangements.

Within the "Right for Children" programme, are monthly Programme Board meetings, chaired by the Director for Children's Services which oversees the monitor and progress against key milestones and against the work stream plans, identifies risk and takes appropriate action to mitigate and unblock obstacles. This Board is supported by the cooperate transformation team

The Project Board monitors progress, with the Project Lead, identifying resource requirements and ensuring they are in place at the appropriate time based on the project plan Each work stream has a lead responsible for the delivery of the work stream plan of the transformation programme. They are supported in their work by the transformation lead and appropriate stakeholder.

Reducing inequalities:

The aim of our 'Right for Children' Transformation programme is to ensure that all children have the right support, in the right place, at the right time, for as long as it is needed to enable them to be safe from harm, happy and learning well with self-belief, aspiration and support to be their best.

Consultation:

18 consultation sessions on our proposed new operating model took place during November and December engaging workforce and key stakeholders including Education, Public Health and Safeguarding Board.

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Report

1. Our Partnership with the What Works Centre

1.1 Walsall was chosen by the What Works Centre to be one of 21 Local Authorities partner to develop a pioneering partnership in becoming an Evidence Informed Organisation.

Our Transformation principles align with the aims and objectives set out by the What Works Centre and therefore this was a timely and exciting opportunity to work in partnership to both support and accelerate our transformation journey and enable us to become an evidence informed local authority.

Getting it right for children will rely on us having a confident and skilful workforce, in the right place, working with the right people to address the 'root causes' of children, young people and their family's needs.

Our ambitious vision will only be achieved if we make strategic and operational decisions that are consistently informed by evidence.

Our transformation programme will rely on evidence from a number of sources:

- national and international research
- through our knowledge and experience in Walsall (our needs assessment)
- through the relationship we have built with children, young people and families.

Using these sources of evidence strategically will ensure that throughout our transformation journey we will secure buy in from partners from the start, we make good decisions on resource allocation and the development of a menu of interventions which will make a difference to children and young people.

into care where it is the right thing to do, is critical going forward.

1.2 During October, The What Works Centre has spent time with us to complete a diagnostic. They conducted 20 interviews, a staff survey and observed a unit meeting, panel and practice improvement forum to help us to reflect on current practice and inform next steps in improving use of evidence strategically and operationally.

The Centre presented their findings and recommendations on 1st November 2018. See appendix 1.

1.3 The recommendations and their Evidence Minded framework will inform the next phase of our Right for Children transformation journey and ensuring that it is shaped by evidence which in turn will ensure we are delivering better outcomes for children and their families.

2. Prevention work stream update

2.1 Our 'Right for Children' transformation programme is intended to reduce the circumstances which lead to children requiring a statutory intervention whether this is related to keeping children safe with families, getting a child back into full time education or preventing a child from re-offending.

Informed by our forensic needs assessment, our prevention strand is focussing in particular on developing effective response to

- Babies who are at risk coming into care (especially those parents who have had previous children removed)
- Young people aged 10- 15 with complex needs (including Special Educational Needs and Disability and behaviour)

- Supporting children who are missing education, who are neglected, who have experienced or witness domestic abuse
- Supporting Families in acute stress.

2.2 Capacity to track, investigate, understand, and respond to the root causes associated with demand, identifying the preventative services required to help families to care for their children at home and to safely stop children from coming into care, where it is the right thing to do, is critical aim of this work stream.

2.3 Following the staff conference on the 18th September and consultation with key stakeholders we have developed a proposed Walsall Right 4 Children Operating Model (appendix 2). The proposed operating model is developed using following principles:

- Children and their family at the centre of what we do
- reducing the number of assessments and handovers
- Focus on support and help and move away from process driven.
- Relationship based support
- Connecting with our communities
- Evidence informed practice

2.4 The model is proposing following changes/ developments:

- Work with schools through our Inclusion Strategy to develop an aspirational entitlement and a robust prevention offer for all children so they can be happy, safe and learning well. We will work with leadership in schools to drive forward the Walsall Right 4 Children vision and good education standards.
- The development of a strong, well-coordinated Early Help Locality offer responding to the needs of children, young people and their families in each of the 4 localities. This work will be informed by the Insight programme.
- Remodelling of our 'Front Door' to strengthen our partnership arrangements, reduce inappropriate demand, reduce the number of assessment leading to no further actions and ensure children and families only have to tell their story once.
- Align Children's Services resources to locality working, where this is the right thing to do for children and families – this is including moving social workers from our Initial response team and safeguarding family support team to our 4 locality buildings.
- Develop a Walsall Right for Children Permanency Hub creating specialist social work knowledge and expertise in working with our legal colleagues and court for children and young people for who we think coming into care is the right decision. This will include a therapeutic Contact Service, development of a Family and Drugs Court and a specialist team supporting parents in preventing repeat removal of babies into care.
- A complete review of our Edge of Care Services and our Spindletree Residential Home is proposed to develop a more proactive and efficient response to our young people aged 10-15 with complex needs and families in acute stress with a focus on supporting families to stay together safely and sustainably. It is proposed that this service is closely aligned with Youth Justice and the Education Nurturing provision to develop an integrated approach in supporting this group of young people.

2.5 During November and December 17 consultation sessions are taking place with staff and stakeholders. This consultation, alongside evidence of national good practice will result in the development of detailed proposals and staffing structures with implementation starting in January 2019.

2.6 In July we launched our Mocking Bird Programme. We were the first in the West Midlands to develop this ambitious and innovative programme set to grow our community of foster carers and the children and young people they care for. The programme sets out to extend the network of family support, empowering families to support each other, overcome challenges and offer children a positive, consistent and secure experience of care. We now have 2 Mockingbird constellations up and running in Walsall, one in Bilston, and the other in Willenhall. Each constellation is composed of 7 satellite fostering households.

The carers in each constellation are meeting up once a month at the Hub carer's home for a coffee morning style meeting, with the opportunity to discuss specific topics, challenges they face, and to support each other.

Each constellation is also meeting up once a month for social activities including all the children and carers. So far trampolining, park visits, afternoon tea at the Hub carers home, RAF Cosford museum, and bonfire excursions have taken place. The adults and children are getting to know each other, and relationships forming. The children are benefitting from having a number of adults sharing an interest in them, and some are spending individual time with the hub carers.

We are supported by and accountable to The Fostering Network. We have also passed our second fidelity check, with Fostering Network being assured by our progress. The next monitoring meeting is planned for January 2019.

We are intending to develop 2 more constellations in 2019, one in the Spring and one in the Autumn, and are in the process of recruiting new Hub carers for these.

3. Restorative practice work stream update

3.1 A restorative Practice Steering group is established with key managers across the directorate taking responsibility for driving forward and embedding Restorative Practice across all teams.

3.2 To date 202 staff members have been trained and from this pool of trained staff 36 champions have been identified across the services and teams to help share and embed good practice.

3.3 Our Restorative Summer provided an 8 week programme of thought-provoking activities to promote, develop and celebrate our commitment to working restoratively with children, young people and families, partners and professionals. Activities included:

- Hearing directly from children about their views on use of Restorative language and approaches
- Interactive 'light bite' workshops across all teams
- Opportunity to build relationships and connect with other professionals
- Opportunity to reflect and share good practice
- Chance to develop practitioners direct work toolkit

3.4 The Steering group has developed a Restorative Practice Maturity matrix. This will enable each service area to reflect on how well restorative practice is embedded and identify the areas for development needed to ensure we have a consistency in practice and can demonstrate the difference this is making to children, young people and families.

4. Commissioning work Stream update

4.1 Within Children's Services we believe that working with our external organisations in a co-production model and services is critical in our pursuit to deliver the Walsall Right 4 Children vision.

We recognise the importance of working with our providers who will bring perspectives and solutions, adding additional knowledge and expertise through their closer proximity to our communities and or the evidence based models which they operate.

Through the development of closer relationships with providers we want to develop an approach that enables you to put forward solutions and stimulate innovative responses and opportunities for co-production of services that supports our children, young people and their families to be their best.

4.2 We are piloting an integrated approach between Children and Money, Home Job to commission a range of accommodation that will provide the right young people with the right place and the right support to acquire the skills to live independently, and make successful transition to independent living. The local authority will be working with the successful providers to ensure clear referral pathways and communication protocols are in place to ensure young people are placed appropriately and issues are resolved proactively reducing placement breakdowns.

In addition our commissioned providers will be required to provide a good service with a Restorative Practice/relationship based approach and within a Psychologically Informed Environment enabling young people to better understand the relationship between their emotions and behaviours in a nurturing rather than a transactional setting.

4.3 We are also piloting a new way of work to prevent children from becoming looked after or reducing the amount of days they spent into care by securing an individualised package of support addressing 'root causes' and meeting the needs of the whole family enabling them to sustainably live together. A workshop has been organised for current providers and the LA on 7th December to test out what a package of support would look like for 5 young people and their families identified. This workshop will be delivered by the Local Government Association who has experience and knowledge in developing this approach.