

December 2023

7.

Locality working and Family hubs

Ward(s): All

Portfolios: Cllr Stacey Elson
Portfolio Holder

1. Aim

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

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 For the direction of travel to date to be supported and any suggested recommendations to be provided.
- 2.2 To consider how overview and scrutiny committee can support in the further development and scrutiny of the locality model and the delivery of Family Hubs

3. Report detail – know

Context – Locality working

- 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 connect practitioners to communities by co-located teams across the 4 locality hubs. This community-based model of working aims to reduce 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 concerns 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 the pandemic 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 professionals, community groups and members of the community, to provide support and assistance and generate solutions for locally prioritised issues.

Unfortunately, shortly after the agreement for the locality-based model was secured, we experienced the COVID 19 Pandemic, causing significant delay to the physical co-location of Social Workers, Early Help Practitioners and key partners.

- 3.2 In January 2023 we provided a progress report on our locality working to Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Since then all 4 localities Hubs are now open and all, except North locality, have co-location of following services: Midwives, Health Visitors, School Nurses, Speech & Language Early Help, Children's Social Care, DWP Housing and Police.

In respect of the North Locality, it was not possible to accommodate the physical co-location of Social Workers and early help practitioners, 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, colleagues worked together and were co-located in the office building of 275 Blakenall Heath in August 2022.

There then followed a series of disturbances and anti-social behaviour in the Blakenall area. The locality office where practitioners were based is on a row of shops that were being targeted by local youths. The increase in tension in the area predated 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. Due to risks to the safety of staff the office was vacated.

A 'Multi-agency North Locality Working Group' was 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.

A risk assessment concluded it was not feasible for Children Services practitioners to return to office building of 275 Blakenall Heath and as a result we have been working with property services to identify alternative solutions. No viable solutions have been identified to date and therefore the North locality Social Work Team remains based at Essington Lodge. The Duty and Family Safeguarding Teams had previously been based at this office, and it is geographically within a reasonable travel distance to the North locality. They are also able to 'drop-in' to the Family

Hub at the former Children’s Centre, and to coordinate direct work with children and families, and working with partners from this Hub. This enables the service to maintain a focus on relationship-based, restorative practice in line with the WR4C vision, and means that from a day-to-day operational perspective the impact of returning to Essington can be mitigated.

This presents significant longer-term challenges however, as with Early Help remaining based in the Family Hub, and the needs of the Family Hub model, means this building is already stretched to capacity. Whilst the current working arrangement is manageable on an interim basis, this impacts on how much work the Duty and Family Safeguarding Teams can do from this building to use it as a true locality hub. The social work teams can travel from Essington to the north locality area in a reasonable amount of time, but this can also act as a barrier for families to engage with their services.

Family Hubs

- 3.3 In February 2023 the DfE confirmed that Walsall was successful in their application as one of the 75 Local Authorities who would receive the Family Hubs Start for Life funding of £3,869m from 2022-2025.
- 3.4 This provided an opportunity to build on the strong foundations of our locality model to develop our Walsall Family Hub programme. Our 4 locality hubs were transformed into Walsall’s 4 Locality Family Hub, launched in July 2023. They aim to provide a welcoming space where children, young people aged 0-19 and up to 25 for those young people with additional needs and their families can go to get advice and support when they need it. Our Family Hubs are in the heart of vulnerable local communities where services have come together providing one ‘front door’ access to get help and to talk to someone in a safe space about sensitive things that maybe worrying them. Our Family Hubs are currently working towards becoming [UNICEF Baby Friendly](#). Together with the Walsall Infant Feeding team, we continue to support families with their feeding journey in Walsall.



- 3.5 In addition to our 4 Locality family Hubs we deliver wider community-based support and services through 10 'Community Spokes' provided through our voluntary and community sector partners. Our 10 spokes will offer advice on a range of local community activities for families, children and young people, provide a space for local families to come together, for services to deliver group work or meet on a 121 basis with families, to provide sessions such as play and stay, baby weighing clinics, digital support services as well as providing foodbanks.



- 3.6 We are also integrating Family hub sign-posting as part of the 28 Walsall Connected sights. Ensuring consistent information and advice is provided. The family Hub team have also a regular presence at the Walsall Manor Hospital team to maximise opportunities to link parents with the Family hub programme.
- 3.7 In addition to physical spaces significant work has been done to develop our digital offer. We have launched our Walsall Family Hub website www.walsallfamilyhubs.co.uk which will provide one front door for advice and information including a service directory of all services available to parents who have children aged 0-19.

We have also commissioned a number of apps to help families to get the right support around giving their children the best start in life:

- Easy Peasy App (EasyPeasy is a smartphone app for parents of preschool aged children. It is designed to improve early child development through increasing positive parent-child interactions and learning at home. The app sends regular game ideas to parents that they can play with their children, combined with information on child development. The design of the app applies behavioural insights to help seed positive habits of play and interaction at home by sending tailored prompts, encouragement, and reminders to parents)
- Baby Buddy App (Best Beginnings' free, advert free multi-award-winning, interactive pregnancy and parenting app, Baby Buddy, has been created to support parents, co-parents and caregivers, and to augment and enrich the work

of frontline practitioners. Baby Buddy provides trusted, evidence-based information and self-care tools, based on the latest research and is endorsed by eight royal colleges, including the Royal College of Midwives and the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists. Baby Buddy is the first parenting app to provide daily content for fathers and other non-birthing parents)

- DadPad (Dadpad is commissioned by Walsall Public Health Services and produced as an app and also written information aimed at engaging and supporting new fathers as they make the transition to parenthood. Through a supply of guides (DadPad) and digital application (DadPad app) new and prospective dads will understand how to access local support as well as be provided with national information specifically aimed at fathers eg safe sleep, how to cope if their baby cries, building a relationship with their baby. This supports perinatal services in engaging and upskilling new fathers in readiness for the postnatal period, and build familial relationships to help new babies thrive and co-parental relationships develop with their babies needs in mind. In Walsall it will be taken forward mainly through the Health in Pregnancy Service who aim to reach 15,000 men over 4 years)

We are in the process of developing a service directory and have mapped out and secured the sign up of over 79 local organisations who would like to be included in our best start in life directory and our 0-19 directory. **52** of the 79 local organisations offer services to families with children 0-5 in Walsall.

Co-production with families

- 3.8 We have set up parent carer panels in each of our localities and are regularly engaging parents in evaluations and feedback. To date 100 parents and carers have engaged in parent carer panels and we have gained feedback through face to face in groups and via Microsoft forms which have been sent out post activity.
- 3.9 Parents and Carers have said they would like us to develop (more of) following activities and services from family hubs:
- Mental health first aid
 - Health and safety awareness
 - Road safety
 - Car seat Safety
 - More courses relevant to families
 - Information on the EYFS framework
 - Programmes and events to develop themselves and their communities
 - Baby sensory groups
 - 0- 1 baby groups
 - Intro to solids workshops / maybe online also so they can do whenever suits.
 - More Breastfeeding peer support groups in Walsall
 - Further stay and play sessions.
 - Weekday activities
 - Family activities and events
 - Speech and Language advice

We have recruited 29 volunteers who support the delivery of peer support to families including peer led parenting, support to fathers, SEND support, healthy eating, breast feeding, etc.

We are also undertaking a targeted programme of activities in partnership with Open Lense media to listen to families who don't take up universal provision. The aim is to understand the barriers and co-produce an offer which will meet their needs and enable them to engage with a focus to close the gap on inequalities.

Communication and marketing

The team produces a termly newsletter (see attachment X) as well as regularly promoting activities in social media.

We are promoting messages through social media, GP's. Maternity, Health visitors, WHG, Community Spokes and Voluntary organisations, education through Childcare and schools, through our communications teams (press releases, inside Walsall etc). This includes securing key information in all GP's rolling screen time in waiting areas



We are now co-producing with all key identified services to create a best start in life booklet with will be distributed to all families. This will be an information booklet that will enable parents with the information they need to understand there parenting journey.

What's going well?

- The locality model has enabled us to create a stable, skilled, and well-connected workforce. The workforce understands their communities well and the resources that are there to help them to connect families to sustainable support when targeted or statutory support services have stepped away.
- Our relationships with partners is growing stronger within the localities enabling partners to work together more effectively to provide children and families effective, consistent information and the right help when needed. This includes our partnership with schools.
- 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
- We are developing a unified language and approached including restorative, trauma informed practice. In addition we are also exploring ways in which we can upscale Family Safeguarding across locality working including the use of clinical supervision and group supervision to ensure effective multi agency practice, while looking after our workforce emotional wellbeing.
- The introduction of Family Hubs is enabling us to be creative at removing barriers and destigmatising help and support including the offer of social care interventions. We have extended the opening times to weekends and evenings to allow greater engagement with working families including fathers.

- We are currently piloting enhanced business support in the North locality to ensure practitioners are enabled to spend as much time with families as possible.

What we are focussing on next to continuing to develop and improve?

- Due to the growing partnership working in localities and the activities as a result of this capacity in our hubs is becoming an increasing issues. We are currently in the process of undertaking a review of our Locality Family Hub. It is envisaged that more space, access to WIFI will be required and solutions will need to be sought through our capital and asset board and partnership groups.
- The additional funding from the DfE has focussed on developing additional services for children aged 0-5, however there is a growing demand around support for adolescents and therefore there is a need to grow our offer for this target group along our 'best start in life' focus.
- In addition to our adolescent offer we will also need a focus to growing our emotional well being and mental health support across all localities.
- Data and information sharing remains an ongoing challenge – this is continuing to provides barriers to enable multi agency proactive, coordinated planning and response.
- The government published their response to the review 'Stable homes, Build on love' in February 2023 setting out its plans to transform early help and children's social care. We believe our locality model sets strong foundations to enable the transformation we anticipate in the final national guidance, but the scale of change will still be significant and we will need to ensure we have the capacity to be able to respond to this. We have already started to think about what this change would mean. As a result we have applied to be a wave 2 pathfinder for the Family First programme.

4. *Financial information*

- 4.1 Government confirmed a funding package for Walsall between £3.774M and £3.937M over the next three financial years (till 24/25) to deliver the programme. The guidance sets out clearly the expected allocation of funding per programme strands. There has been a modest revision of the percentage allocations that have previously been demonstrated.
- 4.2 The Local Authority is the key accountable body for the grant, but there is a clear expectation the programme is developed and delivered in collaboration with partners with Health, Voluntary Sector and Education system. In Walsall we have secured a strong engagement in the development and delivery of Family Hubs from organisations across the Borough including Walsall Council Childrens Services, Public Health, Walsall Together, Community mental health, 0-19 Healthy Child programme (health visiting and school health), paediatric Service, LA Early Years team, Resilient Communities, Walsall Health Care Trust, Housing, Black Country Mental Health; Police and ICS This commitment demonstrates the future success that we all anticipate as being a part of this National work.
- 4.3 Due to the success of our locality working we are having increasing request from partners to be part of the collocated team or deliver activities and interventions from our Family hubs and Spoke for the benefit of children and families. There are growing challenges around access to space and facilities and as a result we are

undertaking a the review of Family Hub locality buildings. We know that this review will highlight the need for capital investment.

5. **Reducing Inequalities**

- 5.1 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.

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**

- 6.1 Our Walsall locality Family Hub Model continues to be developed and will further strengthen the partnership and the offer for children and families, 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.

Background papers



105360 Family Hub
Leaflets and Posters (



Family Hub



Early Help School

Timetables - UniversaReady Newsletter Oct

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