

# Briefing Note

**Title: Children and Young People and Family Scrutiny panel**

**Date: 19 September 2019**

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**For: Councillor Reynolds, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People**

**Intended Audience:** Internal  Partner organisation  Public  Confidential

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**1. Can you talk about your priorities for your portfolio – what areas of work would you welcome the support of scrutiny panel members to help improve services and outcomes for children and young people in Wolverhampton?**

Children's Services has been on a journey of transformation over the last five years, led through the Transforming Children's Services Programme. This commenced with the launch of Families R First which was focussed on reducing the number of children and young people in care and keeping children safely at home. The transformation continued with the re-design of Early Intervention and Prevention in 2016. The programme to date has seen a number of successful outcomes and achieved its aim by reducing the number of Children and Young People in Care from a peak of 807 to under 600 today.

The Transforming Children's Service Programme aligns with the council priority of children and young people getting the best start in life. It is also linked into, with other shared priorities, the wider partnership structures including Wolverhampton Safeguarding Together and the Children and Families Together Board. Underpinning the work of Children's Services is its aim of "working together to provide creative and seamless support to enable safety and opportunity for children, young people and their families." This is underpinned by the values of:

- Developing respectful and empowering relationships with children, young people and families.
- Ensuring children are at the centre of everything we do.
- High aspirations, high expectations.

The strategic priorities plan and annual self-evaluation are the two key documents that set out the areas of strength in Children's Services and those areas that require further development. Both documents are part of the scrutiny timetable and shared with the external regulator OfSTED on a regular basis.

There are five priorities for the next 12 months which are aimed at further improving practice and securing even better outcomes for the children, young people and families we work with. They support the continued improvement journey which aims to make Children's Services in Wolverhampton outstanding.

- Priority one is to continue enabling children to remain safely at home.
- Priority two, where children aren't able to remain at home, we will ensure that they have a permanent and stable placement.
- Priority three is to reduce the number of children and young people who enter the youth justice system and those who remain in it.
- Priority four is ensuring that some of our most vulnerable children have access to education that supports them to fulfil their potential.
- Priority five recognises the value of communities to provide support to each other and we aim to build strong, resilient and healthy communities.

Underpinning all of the priorities above is ongoing work in relation to recruitment and retention of the workforce and continuing to embed a restorative approach.

The Cabinet member seeks assurance in a range of forums including weekly briefings with the Director of Children's Services, visits to different areas of the portfolio with an opportunity to engage with frontline practitioners, through chairing the Children and Families Together board, receiving regular performance info and updates on transformation work e.g. house project etc.

**2. What are your plans for promoting the welfare of all children, particularly those who are considered to be most vulnerable?**

The welfare of all children, particularly those whom are most vulnerable, can be evidence through a range of key programmes and structures. The new Multi-agency Safeguarding Arrangements ensure that focus is put on the most vulnerable individuals in society. The priorities for the next two years will focus on those at risk of exploitation, mental health and early help and prevention and asks the question of safeguarding partners "what difference have we made".

The strategic priority of the council and subsequently the Transforming Children's Service programme also set out to improve the life chances of some of the most vulnerable children and young people. This is evidenced in projects such as the House Project and the establishment of the new POWER2 Team (working with adolescents).

Lastly, a review is currently being undertaken of the Early Intervention and Prevention offer to ensure it is meeting the needs of children and families three years down the line. The review will seek to refresh our offer to ensure it is providing the right support, at the right level and the right time.

**3. To what extent is the Council and other organisations offering a holistic approach when considering the needs of children and young people?**

Children's Services provides holistic support, along with its partners, in a number of ways. The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub, based at the civic, is the front door and receives all referrals for concerns about children and young people and has a range of partners, including health, police, housing, mental health, probation and substance mis-use, who provide a holistic picture of a child or young person and their family which through multi-agency triaging enables the right support, at the right level to be offered.

Another example of holistic working are the eight locality strengthening families hubs across the city which have a range of services co-located in a single location. These include social workers, early intervention, health visitors, midwifery, police and housing. This model enables families to get support in one place from universal through to targeted.

A more recent development of holistic working is the newly established POWER2 team which is made up of social workers, a psychologist, a speech and language therapist and five mentors from the voluntary sector.

The aim of the team is to work with young people, aged 11 to 16, who are identified through existing safeguarding pathways and processes, where the primary concerns relate to the young person's behaviour and risks arising from this and support them to exert more positive control over their lives and to live safely as they progress towards adulthood. This is achieved through establishing a trusted relationship with a key worker and through evidence-based interventions supporting the young person to build self-esteem and resilience.

**4. Improving the population's mental health and wellbeing and preventing mental illness and suicide is a key priority for Wolverhampton – can you give examples of the work being done at the strategic level to ensure that professionals and others have the skills and training needed to identify children and young people with complex mental health or special needs, at an early stage?**

There is a multi-agency Children's Emotional Health and Well Being board that is co-chaired between the council and clinical commissioning group. The purpose of this board is to have strategic oversight of services and pathways relating to Emotional Health and Wellbeing across the continuum of need and hold partners to account for the support they offer children and young people.

Over the last 18 months, the Educational Psychology team have developed training and guidance for school staff on identifying and supporting behaviour and emotional wellbeing in schools. Training in this approach, called "Getting it Right", has been offered to staff from every school in the city, as well as other staff within the council's children's and education services. Further workshops have been developed on the back of this, focusing on topics such as self-harm, anger-management and the impact of trauma.

Alongside this, the Outreach Service, which is delivered by staff from Wolverhampton Special Schools, has developed a training offer for school staff in relation to a range of special educational needs. They have developed and deliver

the WELL (Wellbeing and Emotional Literacy Leaders) programme, and in the last year have developed a master level training course for school staff – the Autism Leaders Award – which is accredited by University of Wolverhampton. The first cohort of 20 have just completed this course, and the aim is for every school in the city to have a qualified autism leader.

Within Wolverhampton there is a Suicide Prevention Stakeholder Forum, coordinated by Public Health. Linked to this, a CYP suicide prevention group has developed plans for training in self-harm awareness for key staff who work with CYP. Staff have also accessed training from Papyrus in suicide prevention.

In April, as part of the HeadStart programme, work started to develop a coordinated training programme in relation to children's mental health and emotional wellbeing. This will build on the Getting it Right approach, and learning from the HeadStart programme, and has been developed following engagement with a range of statutory and voluntary sector services. It will include a range of awareness-raising training opportunities, as well as development of a masters-level accredited programme for mental health leads in schools and will start being implemented this month.

Wolverhampton's Autism Strategy was developed in 2015 and is being implemented. Raising awareness and understanding of autism is one key strand of this strategy. We have worked with professionals and people with autism to develop an online training resource that is aimed at frontline staff in children's and adults' services.

As part of the Transforming Care programme for children and young people with Autism Spectrum Disorder and/or Learning Disabilities non-recurrent funding has been applied for and successfully achieved to provide training for staff across the system in the Black Country to recognise young people who are at risk of admission to tier 4 mental health units and/or criminal justice unit. This training will provide an element of support post diagnosis and help staff to understand the specific needs of this group of young people.

We have been successful across the Black Country in becoming a trailblazer for Mental Health Support teams in schools which includes an element of training for school staff and designated senior leads for each school as well as developing link worker type roles who will be trained Educational Mental Health Professionals and will support children and young people at an earlier stage than has been possible previously. These new teams will also be in a position to support school staff to help young people who are undergoing interventions within more specialist services.

**5. How well do you think Wolverhampton (CAMHS) is performing against national and local performance targets for reducing waiting times from the initial assessment stage and the actual delivery of the appropriate children support services for children and young people in schools?**

The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services are not a council responsibility and are commissioned by the CCG who have provided the following information.

Wolverhampton is currently performing well against NHS waiting times and is currently reporting 5 weeks to time of first appointment for specialist CAMHS. An online digital offer is also available within Wolverhampton where CYP can access online counselling or access a moderated forum with articles and discussions around different topics. This is available via Kooth.com. Access to this counselling service is available within a 24-hour period but the forums and articles can be accessed with immediate effect.

If a CYP is in crisis then they can access support within a 4-hour period if they are attend A and E. The CAMHS crisis team will have a presence in A and E from Monday 9<sup>th</sup> of September 2019 which will result in less admissions to hospital and ensure home interventions are more readily available.

There are currently no national or local targets for provision specific to schools. NHS England expects that 34% of CYP in Wolverhampton who are entitled to access NHS commissioned services for mental health needs are seen. For Wolverhampton this is a total of 2102 CYP. Currently according to Mental Health Data Systems, we are seeing 59.2% of the target that we should reach by the end of March 2020.

**6. What are the key challenges to reducing the waiting time between assessment and the delivery of the appropriate service to children and young people? What more needs to be done to further reduce waiting times?**

The key issues currently are recruitment and retention of staff within the area of emotional mental health and wellbeing and specialist CAMHS for CYP which is the responsibility of the CCG.

There is also a risk that without appropriate emotional well-being services at an early help level being in place to meet the needs of young people at a time when they are confronting challenges the demand on more specialist provision will increase and perhaps unnecessarily. Ensuring capacity within the system to reduce the waiting times remains important and ensuring CYP are assessed correctly and signposted to most appropriate service. This will prevent CYP needing specialist services and having a menu of opportunities available to meet their needs will ensure that waiting times can be further reduced.

**7. What more can be done to support staff working in Wolverhampton JobCentre Plus to help young people with disabilities or illnesses find suitable training and employment opportunities?**

It has not been possible to obtain a response from Job Centre Plus, however, there are a number of initiatives that the council and its partners deliver to support vulnerable young people, including those with disabilities, into training or employment.

The Wolves at Work platform is available to all people within the City. More targeted services include:

- Connexions who offer careers advice and guidance to school aged children

- Impact which is a targeted programme funded through ESF, that provides intensive support in securing employment.
- Talent match works with young adults to support them into employment.
- Ring fenced apprenticeship opportunities for care leavers in Children's Services and are looking to extend this to procured services through social value.

In addition to this the Children and Young People in Care Service have an Education, Employment and Training Officer whose role it is to support young people to remain in education or seek appropriate employment.

For young adults eighteen plus with disabilities the council commissions Enable which provides bespoke support with:

- Careers advice
- CV writing
- Preparation for work – practical skills assessment
- Appropriate work experience to develop skills
- Support with job searching
- Support with applications and interviews
- Support through Job coaching – this is active, in-work support to people from day one of a job, supporting the employee and providing a valuable link for the employer

**8. Can you talk about current and future plans of the Council to better identify and support children and young people who display challenging behaviour in schools?**

In response to concerns about issues in relation to challenging behaviour in schools, a review was undertaken in 2017, which led to the SEMH (social, emotional and mental health) plan. This focused on four key areas: ensuring consistent and understood pathways for identifying and responding to SEMH needs; training for school staff in relation to SEMH needs; improving the support available to schools from specialist services; and, having appropriate and effective alternative provision.

Following this, we have: worked with schools and other stakeholders to develop the Getting it Right approach setting out steps for identifying and supporting behavioural/emotional needs; developed the training offer in relation to behaviour/emotional wellbeing; re-organised Outreach Services, so that there is a single point of access, and increased the capacity within these services to support children whose behaviour is challenging; and undertaken a review of alternative provision.

Work is underway to develop an early intervention support offer from our behaviour and attendance team, and to engage with providers to increase the range of alternative provision that is available to support children whose behaviour is challenging. In addition, the Youth Offending Team have recently started a project called "Back on Track" to provide mentoring support to young people who are identified by schools as being at risk of exclusion and potential involvement with the criminal justice system. Although the number of permanent exclusions from

Wolverhampton Schools remains high, we have seen an overall reduction in exclusions over the last year.

This has been achieved by working with head teachers to explore solutions to problems relating to challenging behaviour in schools, and this academic year we will be implementing a multi- agency support panel. Schools will be able to discuss children displaying challenging behaviour at this panel so that the right support, whether that is in-school support, school-to school support or support from external agencies, can be identified based on the child's needs.

**9. Where are the major gaps in current service provision to vulnerable children and young people and what work is being done to improve the situation?**

In line with The Leader's priority of improving access to activities for children and young people, and building on the success of Summer Squad, a positive engagement strategy is currently being co-produced with children and young people, parents and stakeholders. The strategy will provide an overview of what it is like to grow up in Wolverhampton and what leads to young people making the decisions they do, both positive and negative, and what can be done to offer a broad range of positive opportunities.

The strategy will also collate a list of activities that are available across the City and identify any gaps that may exist and how these can be filled. This will focus on the gaps that exist to support some of the most vulnerable young people and is likely to highlight a need for further work with teenagers in the City.

Another gap that has been identified is the offer of a dedicated prevention and diversionary offer by the Youth Offending Team. Some of the work that has commenced includes:

- Increasing the preventative offer to young people at risk of school exclusion due to behaviours such as knife and/or drug possession at school
- Use of Early Help assessment to offer preventative interventions to identified young people
- Working closely with the A & E Intervention service for young victims of violence (St Giles Trust) to identify young people at risk of entering the CJS and offering voluntary preventative support.