

Cabinet (Performance Management) Panel

27 February 2017

Report title	Update on progress and impact of the Specialist Support	
Decision designation	AMBER	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Val Gibson Children and Young People	
Key decision	No	
In forward plan	No	
Wards affected	All	
Accountable director	Emma Bennett, Children and Young People	
Originating service	Specialist Support	
Accountable employee(s)	Rachel King	Head of Specialist Support
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Report to be/has been considered by	Transforming Children's Services Programme Board	14 November 2016
	People Leadership Team	21 November 2016
	Strategic Executive Board	29 November 2016

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Cabinet (Performance Management) Panel is recommended to:

1. Acknowledge the overall positive impact of the Specialist Support service, following the Children's Service redesign, on children and families in Wolverhampton, in respect of its aims of safely preventing family breakdown.
2. Acknowledge the significant reduction in Looked After Children as a result Children's Services transformation work
3. Acknowledge the increase in the range of services available to support families in crisis and on the edge of care

4. Acknowledge the impact of the Intensive Family Support team, Family Group Conferencing and Upper Pendeford Short Break interventions have had on keeping families together safely
5. Acknowledge the benefits of the Vulnerable Young Person's team in dealing with vulnerability as a whole resulting in earlier and effective safeguarding of young people
6. Acknowledge the opportunities to further develop the work of the Specialist Support service, specifically with regards to developing the workforce and the further support to vulnerable families via therapeutic support and the Supporting Women in the Community and at Home (SWITCH) project.

1.0 Purpose

1.1 In June 2016 a report was presented to the Transforming Children’s Service Programme Board updating on the development of the Specialist Support Service. This report noted that following a whole service redesign of the Early Help service this enabled the reshaping of services with a focus on supporting the most vulnerable families to prevent family breakdown. An outcome of the redesign of Early Help was the development of a new Specialist Support Service implemented in April 2016.

1.2 The Specialist Support service includes the following support for families:-

- Intensive Family Support on a short term, hands on basis, providing wrap around support to families.
- Family mediation and Family Group Conferencing, supporting families to identify their own solutions
- A Vulnerable Young Persons’ team which focusses on key areas that may be indicators of risk for young people, including work to avoid exclusion from school, work with children who have been missing or missing education, or at risk of child sexual exploitation, as well as monitoring elective home education and attendance at school (including statutory enforcement)
- Short break respite support under section 17 regulations
- Therapeutic support through the commissioning of specialist individualized support packages – initially through spot purchasing and longer term through one externally commissioned contract.
- Closer working arrangements with the Emergency Duty team to ensure families who find themselves in crisis out of hours are supported

This report provides an update on the progress and impact of the Specialist Support service since its implementation on April 2016. An overview of the key achievements so far are provided in the table below:

INTERVENTION	IMPACT
Early Help services have been redesigned and the Specialist Support Service has been developed as part of this redesign to ensure support for families on the edge of care	A wider range of support is available for families in crisis in order to try and prevent family breakdown and keep families together safely. The overall number of looked after children has reduced over the last 2 years from just over 800 to 641 in January 2017
INTERVENTION	IMPACT
The Intensive Family Support team provides short term support, intensive support to families including out of hours support (evenings and weekends)	The Intensive Family Support has supported 178 young people (104 families) between April and December 2016. Of these, only 14 young people have subsequently become looked after
Family Group Conferencing is an evidence based approach that encourages family members to work	Between April and December 2016, 114 young people (60 families) have been supported with a Family Group

together to develop a plan to ensure effective care of the child(ren)	Conference. Of these, only 5 young people have subsequently become looked after
Upper Pendeford Farm Short Break Centre provides respite breaks for families where there is a risk of relationship breakdown within a family	Upper Pendeford Farm has worked with 36 young people (125 admissions) between April and December 2016. Some young people have had a series of short breaks in order to prevent family breakdown and of the young people supported only 4 have become looked after
Vulnerable Young Person's team focusses on a number of key areas that place a young person at risk – exclusion from school, school attendance, missing from home/ care, child sexual exploitation, elective home education and admission to Accident and Emergency	This team enables vulnerability to be dealt with as a whole and ensures that risk and vulnerability is identified and appropriate support is put in place for the young person

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Between April 2014 and April 2016 the number of looked after children in Wolverhampton reduced but not to the extent required. The reductions up until April 2016 were largely achieved through specific work streams under the Families R First programme which included the introduction of more robust scrutiny of all admissions into care and focussed reviews of the existing LAC population.
- 2.2 In June 2015 there was recognition that in order to continue on the journey of reducing the number of LAC there was a need to develop additional support for families in crisis and on the edge of care.
- 2.3 Between June 2015 and April 2016 a significant amount of work was undertaken in order to develop a Specialist Support Service aimed at supporting the most vulnerable families in the city at times when they are in crisis. This service was developed as part of the Early Help service redesign with the official launch being in April 2016. The impact of this work has already been seen to be contributing to reductions in LAC.
- 2.4 At its peak the LAC figure in Wolverhampton reached just over 800 and as of January 2017 this is now 641. There has been a specific focus on ensuring all cases on the edge of care receive additional support prior to admission and support available is much more responsive to the family's needs and includes out of hours support.
- 2.5 As the Specialist Support service has been fully operational for more than six months it is now possible to provide a more detailed overview of the progress achieved and impact each of the specific areas within the service.

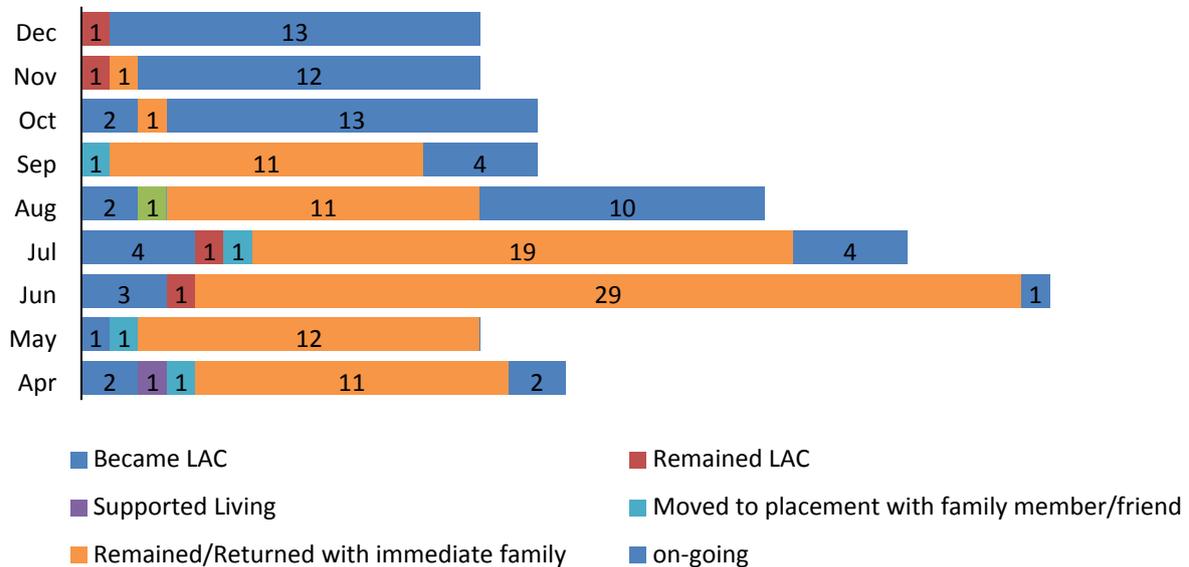
3.0 Progress

- 3.1 Between April and September 2016 the focus for the Specialist Support service was to ensure all the vacancies within the service were filled. Teams are all now fully staffed with the exception of the Intensive Family Support Team where there are 2 vacancies currently out to advert.
- 3.2 In June 2016 when the report was presented to the Transforming Children's Services Programme Board an area identified for development was the need to embed the work of the service. Referral pathways are now clearly understood by social workers and there is effective use of the support available to prevent family breakdown. This has been underpinned by the introduction of a weekly resource panel in September 2016. Social workers have to attend the resource panel in order to access support for families on the edge of care. This has promoted a more planned approach to social workers accessing packages of support. However, where crisis situations arise outside of resource panel social workers can access support directly and then the case is discussed at the resource panel retrospectively. Since the resource panel has been introduced this has impacted positively on the admission to care panel as the majority of cases now presented at admission to care have already gone through the resource panel and explored all support options.
- 3.3 A significant area of work has been to develop a performance framework for the Specialist Support service. A framework is now in place and data for the following areas is reported on a monthly basis:
- Numbers of referrals to Intensive Family Support, Family Group Conferencing and Upper Pendeford Farm Short Break Centre, with referral reasons and outcomes of interventions
 - Number of Children Missing Education Investigations with outcomes
 - School attendance including the impact following a statutory intervention
 - Number of permanent exclusions including local authority performance around engaging pupils back in education within 6 days
 - Number of pupils in Wolverhampton known to not be in school full time and number of hours alternative provision in place
 - Number of electively home educated (EHE) young people with reasons for opting to EHE and how many families are/ are not engaging with local authority support
 - Missing from home and care episodes and performance around engaging young people in missing return interviews

3.4 Impact of Intensive Family Support (IFS)

- 3.4.1 This team accepts referrals predominantly from Social Workers where cases are in crisis and there is a real risk to the child(ren) becoming LAC or where there is a plan to return a LAC child home. The team delivers specific support, often of a practical nature. Interventions do not normally exceed 12 weeks and during this time support can be daily if required (including weekends). Between April 2016 and December 2016 the Intensive Family Support Team has had 104 families (178 children) referred in total. The team is currently supporting 33 families (59 children) on the edge of care. New referrals are

frequently made to the service at a rate on average of 18 families per month. The graph below shows that outcomes of cases closed since April 2016 which evidences that following involvement from IFS only 14 young people have become looked after:



- 3.4.2 In 2015/16 there was 27K funding provided by Safer Wolverhampton Partnership to fund an Independent Domestic Violence Advisor in Children's Services (IDVA). The IDVA is an evidence based nationally accredited role undertaking crisis intervention and safety planning with domestic violence victims assessed as at high risk of serious harm or homicide. IDVAs operate within a multi-agency framework centred around Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC), and provide an independent perspective that facilitates engagement with high risk victims, enabling their views to be represented into multi-agency safeguarding arrangements including criminal and family court procedures.
- 3.4.3 The rationale behind recruiting an IDVA in Children's Services was to improve DV risk assessing and increase the number of referrals Children's Services make to MARAC as this had been historically low. When the IDVA took up post in May 2016 it was decided to place the role within the Intensive Family Support team due to the focus within this team of working closely with social workers to prevent family breakdown.
- 3.4.4 However, during quarter 2 of 2016/17, the IDVA received 26 new referrals from MARAC. Of these referrals 17 were for cases open to Social Care but only 3 of the cases were referred to MARAC by the social worker. This suggests that the IDVA role has not yet impacted on social work practice in relation to cases being effectively risk assessed and referred into MARAC. As a result, the IDVA is spending time based within each of the social work units, as opposed to being based in the Intensive Family Support team, to facilitate closer working with social workers on a day to day basis.
- 3.4.5. The impact of the IDVA role needs to continue to be closely monitored and quarter 3 data is awaited. The role will be maintained during 2107/18 in order to embed improvements within social care.

3.5 Impact of Family mediation and Family Group Conferencing (FGC)

3.5.1 The Family Group Conferencing approach is evidence based and has proved successful when working with families on the edge of care to support extended family members in identifying ways they can work together to prevent family breakdown. On average 9 families are referred every month. Between April 2016 and December 2016, 60 families (114 children) have been referred for FGC resulting in only 5 of these young people becoming LAC. Currently there are 32 families (53 children) currently receiving FGC support. The FGC/ Mediation Coordinator is working closely with the social work units to identify appropriate cases. The impact and value of FGC is evidenced nationally and the approach can be used at an early intervention stage as well as edge of care. Consideration needs to be given to widening the scope of this area to ensure families benefit.

3.5.2 In order to inform future use of FGC/ Mediation contact will be made with other local authorities. In particular, Leeds has invested heavily in developing Family Group Conferencing both within Social Care and Early Intervention. Leeds has used the FGC approach to target specific groups e.g. families with under 5 year olds, families affected by domestic violence, in order to manage and reduce demand.

3.6 Impact of Vulnerable Young Persons Team.

3.6.1 The Vulnerable Young Persons' team focusses on key areas that place young people at risk, including exclusion from school, children who have been missing from home/ care or missing education, children at risk sexual exploitation, electively home educated young people, children with poor attendance at school (including statutory enforcement) and young people admitted to Accident and Emergency due to self harm or being the victim of youth violence. The idea behind bringing all these functions together is to assist in the gathering of intelligence about how vulnerable a young person is. All of these issues can either contribute to a young person being at risk of becoming LAC (e.g. if a young person is disengaged from school/ at risk of child sexual exploitation) or can be an indication a wider dysfunction within the family (e.g. those that frequently go missing from home) that if not addressed can result in a young person becoming LAC. The role of this team is not only to fulfill a number of statutory functions but also to ensure young people have the right support packages in place to avoid them 'slipping through the net ' or prevent needs escalating.

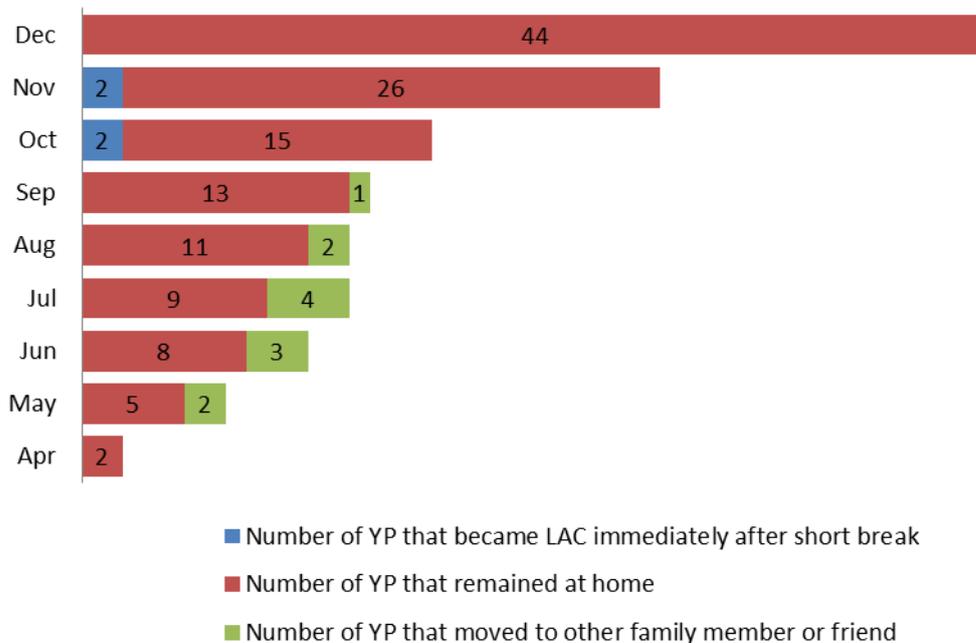
3.6.2 It is clear in the short time this team has been in operation that there is real value in having all these areas covered by one team. Strong links between the areas have been identified at a casework level. For example in October 2016 there were a number of young people who went missing from home for significant periods of time (more than 7 days). Information about the young people's engagement in education was readily available. Through close working between the Missing Returns Officer and the Vulnerable Young Person's Risk Coordinator (who has responsibility for chairing Multi Agency Sexual Exploitation meetings) there was daily exchange of intelligence to build a thorough picture of the links between the missing young people and potential child sexual

exploitation risks. It was also possible via the links with the hospital to get updates about whether the missing young people had had any hospital admissions.

3.6.3 In addition, there is a wealth of performance data produced for each of the specific areas overseen by the Vulnerable Young Person's team that is monitored on a monthly basis. This has assisted in highlighting areas that require further scrutiny. For example, there has been a significant rise in permanent exclusions over the last 3 years and in the number of young people being electively home educated. Plans are in place to address such areas and having these functions located within the same team enables the exploration of potential links between the increases.

3.7 Impact of Upper Pendeford Farm Short-break Centre

3.7.1 Short break support is being offered to young people aged 10-18 predominantly where there are significant relationship issues within a family. Through the Short Break Centre such families are now be able to be provided with packages of respite support whereby young people spend periods of time away from the family home. Whilst at the short break centre staff undertake intensive work with the young person and also outreach work with the family to assist with the young person's return. The home opened under its new remit on 18th April 2016. Since opening there have been 125 admissions (36 young people) into Upper Pendeford Farm; 97 planned short breaks, 8 emergency short breaks (required within 24 hours of referral) and 18 crisis short breaks (placed out of hours including 2 PACE bed admissions). Young people can have multiple short breaks as part of their casework plan and cases remain active for the duration of the involvement. Graph 2 below details the short break outcomes:



3.7.2 There is a need to start increasing the usage of the support available at Upper Pendeford Farm. Occupancy peaked in November 2016 at 62% although this dipped again to 53% in December 2016. The Registered Manager is working closely all social work units to promote the service and also attends the resource panel and admission to care panel to ensure all appropriate cases are identified. Whilst beds are empty staff are providing outreach community support families. Furthermore, there is work underway to extend the remit of the service to include support for LAC young people in order to provide respite to prevent placement breakdown. Advice has been sought from OFSTED about extending the usage of Upper Pendeford Farm and this has been approved.

3.8 Impact of Intensive Therapeutic Support

3.8.1 When the redesign of the Early Help service was completed an area to be developed was an Intensive Therapeutic Support service for families on the edge of care in order to address the underlying issues within the family. It was agreed that this service would be externally commissioned with a contract value of £300k. The local authority went out to tender in January 2017 with a view to the contract being awarded by 1 April 2017.

3.8.2 In order to inform the commissioning of this contract and to test out the market, social workers have been given the option to spot purchase therapeutic support packages of support. There have been 13 referrals made between July 2016 and December 2016 and in all cases a provider was identified. Individual casework is now underway and the impact of the therapeutic support is being monitored. In addition, two focus groups with representatives from across social care were held in November 2016 to consult on what support is required and encourage input into the writing of the specification.

3.9 Impact of work alongside Emergency Duty Team (EDT)

3.9.1 Since February 2016 Family Support workers from across the Children and Young People Service have been working alongside the Emergency Duty team Monday to Friday 6-9pm and at weekends between 11-3pm. The workers have provided additional out of hours support to families in crisis where there is an identifiable piece of work to be undertaken in order to prevent family breakdown. This work is in addition to the out of hours support being offered to families actively open to the Intensive Family Support team.

3.9.2 Feedback from EDT staff is that the additional support has been instrumental in being able to respond to families' needs more proactively. After 12 weeks of the out of hours support being available an interim review was conducted. This evidenced that the Family Support workers had supported 98 families with the predominant intervention being focused around conflict resolution within families who had children aged 8 or above.

3.9.3 With the move towards a regional EDT it is important that there are services in place locally to respond in a timely manner to families in crisis in order to maximize the opportunity of keeping families together safely. When comparing the number of out of hours LAC admissions April – September 2015 to April – September 2016, there has been a 15.6% reduction in the number of admissions.

4.0 Next steps

- 4.1 The Specialist Support service is still relatively new and the true impact of the service will be realised over time. However, it can be seen that there is already evidence of positive impact and progress. Regular and robust monitoring of performance data needs to continue. This will support the identification of any gaps within the service provision but also any areas for improvement.
- 4.2 In addition to the monitoring of quantitative data there also needs to be a focus on the quality of support provided by the Specialist Support service. The development of service specific quality assurance tools is therefore required and this will include file audits and practice observations. In October 2016 an initial practice observation was conducted by the Head of Service. This identified positive relationships being formed with vulnerable families, clear casework planning, a close working relationship between the Intensive Family Support worker and the social worker and progress being achieved with the family within a short period of time.
- 4.3 For each of the key areas of responsibility within the Specialist Support service a six month improvement plan is being developed. This will ensure there is a clear focus on priority areas and will also provide further evidence of the progress being achieved. For example, there are specific plans in place aimed at reducing the number of permanently excluded pupils and to better understand the increase in elective home education. Similarly, as already mentioned, there is a need to ensure effective use of resources via Family Group Conferencing and short breaks at Upper Pendeford Farm. Ongoing work to develop and embed the support available is therefore required.
- 4.5 The importance of investing in workforce development was recognised as a key component within the redesign of the Early Help service. All Specialist Support staff will be trained in Restorative Practice which is a relationship based approach aimed at using a 'high support and high challenge' approach to working with families to effect positive change. However, within the Specialist Service there is also a need to identify areas where staff need to be up-skilled in order to enhance the service offer. For example, plans are in place to train some staff within the Intensive Family Support team in Parenting Assessment Manual (PAM) assessments. These assessments are in-depth parenting assessments that provide detailed evidence of parenting capacity.
- 4.6 In October 2016 a decision was taken to transfer the operational management of the Supporting Women in the Community and Home project (SWITCH) to the Specialist Support service. This project assertively reaches out to, and works with vulnerable women of all ages who have had a recent child removed and taken into care. Its overarching aim is to reduce the numbers of Looked After Children with a specific focus on reducing the numbers of repeat removals. Prior to October 2016 the SWITCH project was being managed as part of the Families R First Programme.
- 4.7 The SWITCH project is an externally commissioned contract managed by Public Health with NACRO being awarded the contract in April 2016. The contract value is £85K per year and the length of the project is two years. Initial work up until October 2016

focussed on establishing the project and promoting the service. Following the mobilisation of the project it was felt that the project needed to be aligned with the wider Specialist Support service in order to ensure that the right families receive support.

- 4.8 Between April 2016 and December 2016 the SWITCH project has received 79 referrals with the majority of referrals being made by Maternity services and recovery Near You (substance misuse service). Given the overarching aim of this project is to reduce the number of LAC and the number of repeat removals it is felt that there needs to be much closer working with Social Care. As such, work has been undertaken to review the service specification. The purpose of doing this has been to ensure clarity in the referral criteria/ the referral pathway and to provide more detail regarding the intensity of support provided to women. The revised service specification clearly sets out the expectations for the provider and performance targets have been adjusted to reflect the changes. Going forward the implementation and impact of the revised specification will be monitored operationally by the Head of Specialist Support along with Public Health Commissioners.

5.0 Financial implications

- 5.1 The overall 2016/17 budget for Specialist Intensive Support £3.2 million.
- 5.2 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report however any costs incurred as a result of proposals will be contained within the existing approved budget. [JF/08112016/S]

6.0 Legal implications

- 6.1 There are no legal implications. [TC/09112016/Q]

7.0 Equalities implications

- 7.1 Equalities issues are directly relevant to this area of Council service and have therefore have been key throughout all points of the work's development from inception to this point. As a result the transformation work has been subject to full equality analysis. The recommendations in this update report follow on from the equalities considerations undertaken over the last year.
- 7.2 Any actions that flowed from this equality analysis are being progressed as the work develops. There are no further equalities issues that have arisen since the last iteration of the equality analysis and the recommendations here can therefore be progressed accordingly.

8.0 Environmental implications

- 8.1 There are no environmental implications.

9.0 Human resources implications

- 9.1 Remaining three vacancies in Intensive Family Support Team to be advertised and recruited to. HR will support in this process.

10.0 Corporate landlord implications

- 10.1 The work to incorporate the Intensive family support and vulnerable persons teams at the Graiseley Centre is complete. Staff are already located within Upper Pendeford Farm supporting the residential setting. Corporate Landlord supported the moves and no further work is proposed at this point other than informing finance of the revised locations for internal recharges etc.

11.0 Schedule of background papers

- 11.1 Children's Service Re-Design, 24 February 2016, Cabinet
Update on the development of the Specialist Support Service, 20 June 2016,
Transforming Children's Services Board