



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

18th JULY 2019

TRANSFORMATION OF THE EARLY YEARS SYSTEM IN RHONDDA CYNON TAF

REPORT OF DIRECTOR PUBLIC HEALTH, PROTECTION & COMMUNITY SERVICES IN DISCUSSION WITH COUNCILLOR CHRISTINA LEYSHON, CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To brief Cabinet on progress with the Cwm Taf Early Years Co-construction Project, and to seek approval to implement the proposed changes to the existing model to deliver the transformation of the early years system in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 2.1 Consider and endorse the progress made to date and proposals for further transformation of the Early Years System in Rhondda Cynon Taf and the Cwm Taf region.
- 2.2 Approve the plan to adopt a phased approach to providing funded childcare based on assessed need that is not limited to existing Flying Start postcode areas, as set out in sections 6.8 to 6.11 of this report.
- 2.3 With effect from September 2019, approve the reduction in the number of weeks per year funded childcare places offered from 42 weeks to 39 weeks to align with Flying Start Guidance and current practice in the rest of Wales.
- 2.4 Subject to 2.2 & 2.3 above, submit a formal proposal to Welsh Government seeking Ministerial support to pilot the changes to the Early Years system; implementing the outcomes of the Early Years Co-construction Pathfinder Programme.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 In July 2018 the Cwm Taf Public Services Board directed the creation of a single approach to early intervention that focuses on the principles of building of resilience; applies vulnerability profiling data to support the targeting of services; and delivers an integrated Early Years system through improved collaboration on approaches to TAF, in order to fulfil the vision of providing the right support to the right people at the right time.
- 3.2 This work has progressed well in Rhondda Cynon Taf and collaborative working with Welsh Government and Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board, through the Cwm Taf Early Years Co-construction Board, identified a number of operational changes that were necessary to support the move to a needs based model for the delivery of Early Years services across the region.
- 3.3 A number of these required changes are now complete including the restructure of the Council's Community Wellbeing and Resilience Service. The proposals for a Wellbeing and Resilience Health Visiting Programme is well developed, which if approved, will pilot the delivery of a needs based enhanced Health Visiting service across RCT.
- 3.4 A phased approach to support the transition of services from a model of delivery based upon geographical entitlement to a needs based one is planned, subject to Member's approval and subsequent support from Welsh Government.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Flying Start was launched by the Welsh Government in 2007 aiming to make a decisive difference to the life chances of children aged under 4 in the most deprived areas of Wales. Flying Start eligible areas are identified using the Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) data as set out in the Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation. Traditionally in RCT this has meant that communities are divided between streets eligible for this enhanced support and those that are not. The Flying Start programme comprises four core elements that have been delivered in RCT in the following ways:
 - **Parenting** - formal parenting programmes for parents with children aged 0-4 years living in Flying Start postcode areas
 - **Early Language and Communication** – support for children in childcare settings and support for parents to encourage early language development of children aged 0-4 years living in Flying Start postcode areas
 - **Health Visiting** – enhanced and specialist Health Visiting interventions for children aged 0-4 years and their families living in Flying Start postcode areas only

- **Childcare** - Children living within eligible postcode areas are entitled to receive free childcare for 12.5 hours per week for up to 42 weeks of the year from the term following their second birthday until the end of the term following their third birthday.

4.2 In November 2017 the Cwm Taf Public Services Board agreed to work with the Welsh Government to undertake a joint collaborative approach to redesigning Early Years arrangements across Cwm Taf. The Early Years Co-construction Board was established in December 2017 and was tasked to:

- Explore how early years services might be re-configured within existing budgets;
- Explore what it will take to create an Early Years system locally (0-7 years);
- Work together to deliver services in a co-ordinated, integrated and timely way, including effective transition between services;
- Focus on improving the co-ordination of services, planning, commissioning and identifying and addressing needs;
- Identify barriers to integration and remove them.

4.3 The ambition for the Board, comprising of senior Officers from RCT, Merthyr, Welsh Government, Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB and Public Health Wales, was to deliver on the vision which is set out in Prosperity for All; “to create a truly joined-up, responsive system that puts the unique needs of each child at its heart”. This means every service that families and young children come into contact with being clear about how they can best support child development in the broadest sense. It will target parents as early as possible and sustain support where it is needed. Investing in the early years is an investment in the economy and workforce of the future;

‘We want children from all backgrounds to have the best start in life. Our aim is that everyone will have the opportunity to reach their full potential and maximise their chances of leading a healthy, prosperous and fulfilling adulthood, enabling them to participate fully in communities, the workplace, and contribute to the future economic success of Wales.’

Prosperity for All – the National Strategy (Welsh Government)

4.4 A number of system wide priorities were identified early on as requiring attention, which included overcoming the operational challenge of Flying Start services only being available in specific postcode areas when the need for enhanced support is not geographically confined.

4.5 As a result, a paper was presented to the Public Services Board on 17th July 2018 outlining a proposal to align the work of the Early Years Co-construction Project with the Children’s First initiative and the Funding Flexibilities Pathfinder, in order to transform services in a co-ordinated way. The Public Services Board unanimously agreed the proposals within the

paper and instructed Officers to begin implementing a number of developments including:

- A single integrated approach to early intervention is developed that focuses on the principles of building of resilience; applies vulnerability profiling data to support the targeting of services; delivers an integrated Early Years system through improved collaboration on approaches to TAF.
- An Early Years Vulnerability Profile (0-7 years) is developed to identify the level of need of families and piloted in RCT as an alternative to the geographically based eligibility criteria of Flying Start.
- That any future approach is sufficiently resourced and maximises budgets within Funding Flexibilities and challenges the use and alignment of core budgets.

4.6 As a Funding Flexibility Pathfinder from April 2018, Cwm Taf was given greater flexibility on how ten identified grants were spent to meet Welsh Government's strategic outcomes. Based on the outcomes of this Pathfinder work, two new grants have been issued to Local Authorities from April 2019, and comprise the following programmes:

Children and Community Grant (CCG)

- Flying Start
- Families First
- Communities First Legacy Fund
- St David's Day Fund
- Childcare and Play
- Promoting Positive Engagement (for young people at risk of offending)
- Communities for Work Plus

Housing Support Grant (HSG)

- Supporting People
- Homelessness Prevention
- Rent Smart Wales Enforcement

4.7 The flexible use of grant funding offers the means to strengthen our position through the creation of a single approach across all programmes that sees:

- The removal of the existing eligibility criteria of individual programmes to be replaced by a single mechanism to identify need;
- The development of a single point of access for individuals and families;
- The use of a single assessment process and tool that focuses on identifying support required by the individual/family to build their resilience; and
- The use of a single outcomes framework to measure impact, and to make the approach more meaningful.

- 4.8 However, whilst the Children and Communities Grant has been established with full flexibility, at present the Council is still required to meet the Flying Start grant terms and conditions. This means ensuring the delivery of the four key strands of the programme: Parenting Support; Early Language and Communication Support; enhanced Health Visiting Services; and Childcare.

5. SYSTEM CHANGE PRIORITIES

- 5.1 Following the decision of the Public Services Board to create an integrated delivery model, the following principles were identified by the RCT Funding Flexibilities Lead Officer Group as essential to underpin an effective model in RCT:

- Inclusive target groups – the model needs to be able to meet all the needs of existing target groups and deliver the current benefits of existing individual programmes as a bare minimum;
- Clear identification and assessment of need for early intervention and prevention – the process needs to be robust enough to provide a viable alternative to the existing arrangements;
- A clear pathway of support as part of a continuum that provides the right support to the right people at the right time via universal access to a single ‘front door’ into services;
- Seek to reduce the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE’s) by building resilience through interventions delivered by trauma informed staff;
- Cannot be directed by existing funding criteria or restrictions, e.g. geography / age – full flexibility is required to respond to assessed need;
- Concerned with a whole system change with agreed single vision and a common set of operational delivery principles;
- Can be accessed from community settings;
- Underpinned by a robust outcomes framework.

- 5.2 Having been established as the single integrated delivery model for RCT and already delivering Team Around the Family (TAF) arrangements, the Resilient Families Service was identified as ideally placed to provide the framework for service delivery.

- 5.3 To deliver a new Early Years System for RCT that is truly responsive to the needs of children and families, it is necessary that the Council moves away from the delivery of services that are determined by geographical postcodes to a model that promotes universal access to services for all families in RCT. To do this it is necessary to use the full flexibility of both the Children and Communities Grant and the Housing Support Grant to deliver the vision of providing the right support to the right people at the right time.

- 5.4 Within a needs based approach the key priorities for the delivery of the four strands of the Flying Start programme are:

- **Parenting** – provide open access to informal parenting support and formal parenting programmes for parents with children up to the age of 18 years and specialist support for parents with children with additional needs
- **Early Language and Communication** – delivered as a targeted early intervention for children aged 21 months identified as experiencing language delay and also for children up to the age of 7 years who are not making expected progress
- **Health Visiting** – access to enhanced Health Visiting interventions is available across the whole of RCT for children aged 0-5 years and their families
- **Childcare** – funded childcare for 2-3 year olds is provided as part of a co-ordinated package of support for families based on assessed need

Delivery of all four programme strands within a needs based approach will be facilitated by universal access to a single 'front door' via the Resilient Families Service.

- 5.5 This needs based approach has been developed in partnership with Welsh Government and agreed through the sign off of the joint Families First / Flying Start Delivery Plan for 2019-20.

6. **PROGRESS TO DATE**

- 6.1 As part of the Funding Flexibilities Pathfinder work in 2018-19 a number of Flying Start programme expansions were piloted in Rhondda Cynon Taf with the use of Families First grant money. This included the universal delivery of parenting support for any parent in RCT with a child up to the age of 18 years. It also included the location of Specialist Flying Start Health Visitors and Community Nursery Nurses within the Resilient Families Service (RFS) to provide Health appraisals and interventions for any families open to RFS, not just those living in Flying Start postcode areas. Both of these pilots were successful and have been mainstreamed.
- 6.2 In order to implement the developments as supported by the Public Services Board, the re-organisation of the RCT Early Years and Family Support Service was required to deliver an integrated Early Years System for 0-7 year olds across RCT that is fully aligned with the Resilient Families Service to deliver the right support at the right time.
- 6.3 Building on the pilot work, the Community Wellbeing and Resilience Service has been re-organised to facilitate an open access / universal offer to children and families that can deliver targeted enhanced and specialist support to those who need it most, wherever they live in RCT. Based upon an early intervention approach, this new Service structure sees the main

functions of Early Years integrated within existing models of delivery of both universal and enhanced services to children, young people and families.

- 6.4 From 1st April 2019, the Resilient Families Service has been expanded to include a new Parenting Support Team to provide direct and responsive parenting support (including crèche provision) and children's early language and communication intervention for families referred to the Service. Both of these Flying Start programme strands are now universally available for families across the County Borough.
- 6.5 Working alongside Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB, the Resilience and Wellbeing Health Programme has been created to pilot the delivery of enhanced Health Visiting Services on a universal basis across RCT.
- 6.6 The current staffing arrangement of Generic Health Visitors and Flying Start Health Visitors will be replaced with Family Health Visitors able to provide enhanced Health Visiting interventions for any family identified as requiring it across Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- 6.7 The governance around the Family Health Visiting model is defined within a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) and ensures alignment with the Health Child Wales Programme (HCWP).
- 6.8 The Family Health Visitor determines as per the HCWP a family's needs and determines if the family require *Universal Enhanced* or *Intensive* Health Visiting and has additional support needs outside of Health Visiting
- 6.9 As part of the revised programme, all children will receive a developmental assessment (SOGS) at 24 months and an additional speech and language screening assessment at 20 months; aiming to identify issues of concern and where additional support is required, as early as possible.
- 6.10 Where additional support needs are identified, Family Health Visitors will refer families to the Resilient Families Service, who following assessment will build a bespoke Family Plan to provide the right support at the right time. This plan may include support in relation to:
 - Developing confidence and skills to deal with everyday parenting challenges;
 - Housing issues;
 - Help with family finances;
 - Options for childcare;
 - Early language and communication skills;
 - Transition into school;
 - Strengthening support networks;
 - Accessing community activities/facilities;
 - Help with routines;

- Building emotional resilience;
- Access to employment or training.

611 It will be necessary to employ a phased approach to support the transition from the geographical entitlement model of providing funded childcare, to a model where funded childcare is universally available for those children and families most in need. To ensure fairness and minimise the impact on families of the change to the model, it is proposed that the Council honours any existing offer of childcare made to families in Flying Start areas under the current Flying Start model up until a specified date. Subject to approval of these proposals by Members, the Council will seek support from Welsh Government for the proposed changes after which the dates for transitional arrangements can be confirmed. The principles of the transitional arrangement will be:

All children born in a Flying Start area on or before the prescribed date will be automatically entitled to receive three terms of funded childcare from the term after their 2nd birthday.

For all children born on and after the prescribed date anywhere in Rhondda Cynon Taf, eligibility for funded childcare between the ages of 2-3 years will be determined on assessed need via the Resilient Families Service following referral from Family Health Visitors. Those families who are not deemed as being in need of funded childcare will be signposted to other service areas for information and advice and to other childcare options.

- 6.12 This will require the Council to make a three year commitment to see through the provision of funded childcare for children born on or before the prescribed date in Flying Start areas, with the last cohort leaving childcare placements after three years.
- 6.13 In order to support the financial implications of the Council's commitment to implementing a phased approach whilst at the same time adopting a needs based approach, it is proposed that from September 2019 the number of weeks per year funded childcare places are offered will be reduced from 42 weeks to 39 weeks to align with the rest of Wales. Currently RCT is the only local authority that provides above the stipulated 39 weeks of childcare per year stated in the Welsh Government Flying Start Guidance. The proposed reduction in weeks would release £175k per year, offering a contribution of £525k over the three year transition period towards the provision of funded childcare based on assessed need, equivalent to 165 places.
- 6.14 These three additional weeks are delivered at the end of the summer term and as such attendance rates at settings are consistently poor. The decision to reduce the number of weeks offered from September 2019 would not affect any children currently receiving a funded childcare place, as they will be due to leave placement at the end of the spring term 2020.

- 6.15 Building on the experience of RCT in implementing Vulnerability Profiling to successfully target resources, Welsh Government has provided funding to employ a Vulnerability Profiling Development Officer to provide capacity to accelerate the creation of an Early Years Vulnerability Profile for Cwm Taf. This post currently sits within the Community Wellbeing and Resilience Service and discussions are underway with the UHB about the inclusion of child health data in this profile.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (Public Sector Single Equality Duty) requires public authorities to demonstrate in decision making that they have paid 'due regard' to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

- 7.2 The United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child also requires the Council to demonstrate that decision making has paid due regard to the rights of children and young people.

- 7.3 An Equality Impact Assessment Screening Form has been prepared in respect of the transformation of the Early Years System in RCT. The screening has identified that due to the phased approach proposed and the timing of the proposed change in the number of weeks childcare is offered, the changes to the delivery model have limited impact on children and families therefore a full Equality Impact Assessment would not be required at this time. The screening form can be accessed by contacting the author of the report or the Cabinet Business Officer.

8. CONSULTATION

- 8.1 Consultation with parents and families was undertaken prior to the implementation of a universal parenting offer across RCT in April 2018. At this time, parents reported that they would like to see more informal support tailored to their needs that they could access in their local communities. They also requested support for specific elements of parenting such as managing behaviour and supporting the educational needs of their children. Further consultation is ongoing on an informal basis with those families who have received parenting support as part of the Resilient Families Service.

- 8.2 A strategy is in place to support communication of the potential changes to the Early Years System in RCT to parents and families. In addition to the usual mechanisms for the dissemination of information via leaflets, website

and social media platforms, all families with children under the age of 5 will receive information via Health Visitors.

- 8.3 Consultation with partners including; health, education, housing providers, childcare and play providers, and third sector organisations takes place on a termly basis via the Resilient Families Service Provider Network Meetings, and also on a one to one basis during contract monitoring visits. All commissioned partners are signed up to providing universal access to family support services as set out in the Council's Resilient Families Programme.
- 8.4 Full consultation on both the new Community Wellbeing and Resilience Service structure and the transformation proposals for the delivery of future Early Years Services was undertaken with staff in January 2019 as part of the Council's Management of Change process.
- 8.5 Public consultation was also undertaken on the proposed Early Years transformation in June 2019. 254 responses were received via an online survey on the Council's website and face-to-face consultation undertaken at the Teddy Bear's Picnic event. Respondents were overwhelmingly in favour (96%) of offering support to any family in RCT with an identified need, rather than restricting support to particular postcode areas. 85% of respondents also supported a reduction in the childcare offer from 42 weeks to 39 weeks per year, and the subsequent introduction of 15 family fun sessions during holiday periods. The full Consultation Report is included at Appendix 1.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 9.1 The cost of all transformation activity will be met from existing grant funding as part of the new Children and Communities Grant. The creation of the Children and Communities Grant is providing far more flexibility than the Council has previously had to resource current provision and future initiatives to meet identified gaps.
- 9.2 As with any transitional period there will be budget pressures until the new model is fully implemented. However financial re-profiling of the existing Flying Start grant has facilitated the reallocation of money within the grant to support the transitional period for childcare to enable the Council to honour the existing Flying Start childcare offer for children born in RCT prior to a date to be determined. Any funding released from re-profiling or from in year grant slippage will be re-allocated into the provision of funded childcare based on assessed need.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 10.1 There are no legal implications arising from these proposals; however consultation with Welsh Government is ongoing via both the Cwm Taf Early Years Co-construction Board and the Funding Flexibilities Pathfinder

Programme to ensure transformation proposals do not contravene grant funding conditions.

- 10.2 The following legislation has been considered in relation to the development of these proposals:

The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014:

- Putting an individual and their needs, at the centre of their care, and giving them a voice in, and control over reaching the outcomes that help them achieve well-being
- Supporting people to achieve their own well-being and measuring the success of this care and support
- Increasing preventative services within the community to minimise the escalation of critical need
- Strong partnership working between all agencies and organisations.

11. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

- 11.1 The implementation of the new Early Years System for RCT will contribute to the Council's corporate priority to 'promote independence and positive lives for everyone' in the following ways;

- Redesigned local services - integrated and efficient
- Rhondda Cynon Taf's children and young people will receive a great start in life

- 11.2 The Early Years System has been developed in full consideration of the sustainable development principles. The proposal will also support the Council to contribute to the well-being goals:-

- **A prosperous Wales:** children who receive support at the earliest opportunity are more prepared for adulthood and achieving prosperous futures.
- **A healthier Wales:** access to enhanced support that is not restricted by geographical boundaries supports all children who need it to meet their developmental milestones and develop social skills, enhancing their emotional wellbeing.
- **A more equal Wales:** by delivering services based on an assessment of need as opposed to being limited by geographically based eligibility criteria ensures that those children and families most in need of support have access to it irrespective of where they live.
- **A Wales of cohesive Communities:** access to services that are not restricted to particular communities promotes equality and harmony

across communities and the means to share community resources in order to be responsive to need and build resilience.

- **A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language:** children who are given the freedom to progress through the early years in the language of their choice learn to be tolerant and accepting, preparing them for a multi-racial, globalised adult world.
- **A globally responsible Wales:** children who have access to effective early years opportunities are afforded experiences that prepare them to be globally responsible adults.

12. CONCLUSION

- 12.1 This report has provided Members with details of the progress to date and ongoing work in transforming the Early Years System in RCT to deliver the right support to the right people at the right time.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972
AS AMENDED BY
THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985
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Background Papers

[Delegated Decision](#)

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