

**CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.**

**CABINET / EMT  
16<sup>th</sup> February 2021**

**REPORT AUTHOR: County Councillor Rachel Powell  
Portfolio Holder for Young People and Culture**

**REPORT TITLE: Children's Services Early Help Strategy**

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**REPORT FOR: Decision**

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**1. Purpose**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report and the accompanying Early Help Strategy is to inform, update and seek approval from the Cabinet Executive in respect of the expanded Powys Early Help Offer and our shared vision for the provision of multi- agency, integrated Early Help across Powys. The Strategy sets out our current Early Help offer as well as the direction of travel over the next three years.

**2. Background**

- 2.1. The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 is a key driver in the development of Prevention and Early Intervention and the Act places a specific duty on Social Services to ensure provision of preventative and Early Help Services. The Act requires significant changes in the way social services are planned, commissioned and delivered, characterised by a stronger emphasis on increased citizen engagement and ensuring voice and control for people who need care and support, and carers who need support; prevention and early intervention; the promotion of well-being; co-production – citizens and professionals sharing power and working together as equal partners; and multi-agency working and co-operation.
- 2.2. The Act focuses on earlier intervention, increasing preventative services in the community, helping people maintain their independence and enabling people to get the help they need before their situation becomes critical. This will help to reduce pressure on more costly statutory services.
- 2.3. Additional to this, the Care Inspectorate Wales Report (October 2017) highlighted that children and young people did not appear to be well served by the then, current arrangements for accessing support services in Powys. The report identified that the local authority needed to undertake further work in relation to implementing the requirements of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 so there is understanding at a corporate level in relation to the delivery of information, advice, and assistance. The Report stated that the Local Authority and partners must work together to develop a cohesive approach to the collection and analysis of information about the needs of communities, which includes the views of children and families. This should be used to inform the shaping of strategic plans to achieve effective alignment of service delivery between information, advice and assistance services, the preventative sector, and statutory services.

**2.4.** Prevention and early intervention are at the heart of the Welsh Government's programme of change and there is a clear need to focus on these principles to ensure that social services are sustainable for the future. Promoting well-being must include a focus on delaying and preventing the need for care and support to avoid escalation. Information, advice, and assistance must be made available at the right time and in the right place to enable people to retain control over their day-to-day lives and achieve what matters to them. Local authorities must empower people to produce innovative solutions for delaying, preventing, and meeting the needs for care and support through local networks and communities.

**2.5.** To monitor the performance and progress of the Early Help Strategy, a governance framework has been established. The Early Help work stream will be the key delivery driver for the implementation of strategy and is governed by the Start Well Partnership Board. Together, these forums will serve to provide operational and strategic challenge to the work of Early Help.

### **3. Advice**

**3.1.** Alongside the legislative imperative there are a raft of local Strategies which underpin the Powys Early Help offer. The Powys Health and Care Strategy 2020-27 requires local agencies to introduce collaborative approaches to identify and understand the potential unmet needs for children and families. The Early Help and Support focus of the strategy will implement partnership processes for the effective assessment of children and young people who will benefit from early help services. The Early Help Strategy is aligned with Powys Corporate Strategy; Powys 2025 – Our Vision, which focuses on key areas including wellbeing, early help and support and local coordinated support. Strengthening community development and resilience and support for communities to do more for themselves and reduce demand on Public Services. The Service Performance will contribute towards that vision with an emphasis on Early Help and support:

**3.2.** The Powys 2025, Vision for the Future Outcomes:

- Focussing on wellbeing.
- Early Help and Support.
- Providing joined-up care and support.
- Developing a workforce for the future.
- Creating innovative environments.
- Developing digital solutions.
- Transforming in partnership.
- Improving the educational attainment of all pupils.
- Supporting children and families to have the best start in life.
- Improving the skills and employability of young people and adults.
- Strengthening community development and resilience.

**3.3.** Welsh Government's Core Aims for children and young people in Wales:

Core Aim 1 - have a flying start in life.

Core Aim 2 - have a comprehensive range of education and learning opportunities.

Core Aim 3 - enjoy the best possible health and are free from abuse, victimisation, and exploitation.

Core Aim 4 - have access to play, leisure, sporting, and cultural activities.

Core Aim 5 - are listened to, treated with respect, and have their race and cultural identity recognised.

Core Aim 6 - have a safe home and a community which supports physical and emotional wellbeing.

Core Aim 7 - are not disadvantaged by poverty.

- 3.4. As a response to these drivers, Powys Children's Services restructured and expanded our Early Help offer in July 2019 to better align resources and improve integrated working across localities. This includes bringing 'in house' previously commissioned Services: providing better value for money and the creation of a more diverse, flexible, and responsive service.
- 3.5. The Powys Offer ensures that families and parents receive information, advice, or assistance at the most appropriate level as part of a stepped approach. Children and families in need of Early Help often have a range of needs and different levels across a continuum. In Powys we have a shared framework known as the 'Regional Thresholds and eligibility for support Document; The right help at the right time for children, young people and their families' for all our work with children and families and to help us to identify need as early as possible and offer a proportionate response to address need.
- 3.6. Powys Children's Services Early Help Offer encompasses:
- 3.7. **Universal Services**
- 3.8. **Family Information Service (FIS)** The FIS provides a range of information for Children and families and helps families navigate their way around family information and support in Powys. FIS signposts to useful services, campaigns, projects, initiatives or other sources of information and support. We have an online presence which reaches families across Powys with our audience growing daily. From creating interactive and attractive information Facebook posts to being admins on local Facebook community groups we can connect and engage the families in the communities of Powys. This is a universal service.
- 3.9. **Home start** Also Universal, this service will recruit volunteer parents to help support new parents. A Home Start service is successfully operated and embedded in other local authorities with proven evidenced outcomes when working with families. Looking at data it is evident it will strengthen and enhance the Early Help offer for all families who have some difficulties but do not require coordinated support.
- 3.10. **Enhanced / Targeted services**
- 3.11. **Stronger Families** We aim to promote, co-ordinate and deliver parenting support in line with Welsh Government guidance to strengthen parenting capacity, develop and build resilience, sustain positive change, and reduce risks. Providing evidence based and structured parenting support through groups and 1:1 home coaching. The groups run are both formal evidenced based groups such as Incredible Years parenting courses, as well as informal groups such as baby massage, bumps to babies and young parents, to support children, young people and families, based on the local need within their community. The groups not only support parents with building knowledge and confidence with positive parenting strategies, but also encourages them to build their social networks. The Parenting support provided through Stronger Families, as part of our Parenting Offer will be subject to ongoing review in respect of

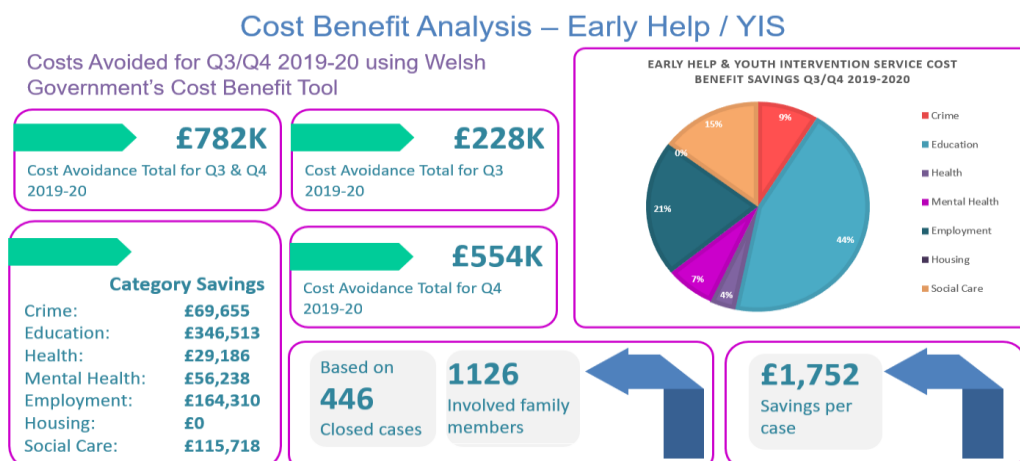
its effectiveness in meeting identified need and reaching and making a difference to our most vulnerable families.

- 3.12. Support for Families** Support workers provide flexible and adaptable support, based on individual family's needs. The support workers work with all ages (0-18) and provide a holistic family approach working in both a planned and structured way, as well as being able to provide a more intensive support when families are in crisis. This area of the service tends to receive any step down of cases from statutory assessment teams and care and support teams. This is to ensure that the correct level of intervention is provided to prevent the need for a child or young person re-entering statutory services. At this level of the stepped approach to Early Help we commission services from the Youth Intervention Service who undertake work with 12-18-year-old children and young people and families.
- 3.13.** We use the Early Help Referral and Assessment document to progress a referral for targeted Early Help (replaces the CAF). Any agency / individual (including families themselves) can complete an Early Help Referral, this outlines what the worries are as well as what the strengths and identified support needs are.
- 3.14.** Once completed, this is sent into the central Early Help Team which is the team who have operational responsibility for managing and coordinating the Early Help Services detailed above, these teams are based the North and South of the County. Referrals are 'triaged' on a weekly basis and the threshold eligibility for support guidance is used to inform what kind of support would be most proportionate and best meet identified needs.
- 3.15.** From the point of triage, a case will either be allocated to a family support worker within the Early Help team, referred to a commissioned service (such as Youth Intervention Service), or the case may also be signposted to an appropriate support, providing the right help at the right time.
- 3.16.** We have adopted the 'everybody's business' approach so where a multi-agency targeted response is required (2+ agencies) a Team Around the Family Plan and meeting will be convened (please see appendix flowchart). A lead practitioner will be identified, this may be a family support worker but equally could be any professional working with the family, such as health visitor, teaching assistant or a professional from a nursery. The purpose of the Lead Practitioner is to ensure that family have a supportive plan lead by a trusted professional which is reviewed on a regular basis. Support for Families Co-ordinators based in the Early Help Team support professionals and families in this process.
- 3.17.** We measure the effectiveness of the support a family receives through the Distance Travelled tool, which is first completed in the Early Help Referral (beginning scores) and is rescored during each review meeting. This ensures that the plan is effective, and families are feeling confident with the progress of changes they are making. The start and end scores are then recorded to give us an understanding of how far a family feel they have come.
- 3.18.** Central to our vision of an expanded Early Help offer in Powys is the development of locally based community support. The ambition, which is already underway, is to have 5 Early Help Hubs across the County. Each hub will be an open access community resource and a 'one stop shop' providing support, advice and information to children, young people, and families.

- 3.19.** Within Powys, there are 5 Flying Start areas, these areas are Welshpool, Newtown, Llandrindod Wells, Brecon, and Ystradgynlais The Early Help Hubs will be developed in these areas but will be accessible to all families who wish to use the resource.
- 3.20.** Within the Flying Start programme, capital funding has been awarded to establish and develop the Early Help Hubs with funding already in place for Welshpool and Brecon Hubs. To date, Newtown Integrated Family Centre is operational with a range of professionals co-located in the hub offering seamless support to children, families, and the community. The Newtown Integrated Family Centre is based around the concept of a one-stop shop providing services such as Powys Teaching Health Board, Childrens Services – Early Help Team, Family Support and Action for Children together in one place for families to access.

#### 4. Resource Implications

- 4.1.** The Early Help Teams are funded through a mix of baseline budget which pays for the staffing costs for 'Support for Families' workers and Families First and Flying start grant funding which pays for Stronger Families, Family Support Co-ordinators, Home start and FIS. As these resources are paid for out of our existing budget there are no additional resource implications, however consideration will need to be given to the proportion of grant funding which supports this service.
- 4.2.** Providing effective targeted early help is critical in a time of significantly reduced public expenditure. When there is less money for resources it is increasingly necessary to ensure that resources are targeted where they will make the greatest difference. When the high costs of non -intervention and late intervention are compared to the significantly lower costs of early intervention, it becomes clear that intervening early will make the best use of our limited, shared resources and in the long- term early intervention can yield significant savings.
- 4.3.** We the use of the new Cost Benefit Tool developed by Welsh Government.to estimate the savings to Public Services through our Early Help Offer. The Cost Benefit Tool has been used across 100% of closed early help cases in Q3/Q4 of 2019-20 and this evidenced a cost avoidance of £782k. It is important to note that only £116k of this £782K is a cost avoidance to Social Services.



- 4.4. Flying Start within Powys has been awarded £820,000 capital funding for the creation of an Early Help Hub in Brecon. The project is a co-production with the third sector organisation Cymryd Rhan. Cymryd Rhan have purchased the Youth Centre building, which is situated in the heart of the Flying Start LSOA and we will partner with them to refurbish the childcare space, office space and meeting rooms. In exchange for our capital investment, we will operate from the building, rent free for a minimum of five years. The vision of Flying Start and the aims of Cymryd Rhan are well suited for this project as Cymryd Rhan are looking to have a building that serves the local community and engages with all ages, so there is significant crossover in both organisations' aspirations. We are confident of a deadline of March 2022. In respect of the Brecon project, we are not seeking approval at this time but highlighting it as an initiative in progress and a more detailed paper with specific information will be submitted in due course.
- 4.5 Desk space will be charged to organisations and providers using the office and childcare facilities located at the Early Help Hub in Brecon; those spaces utilised by the early help team will be funded via the Early Help budget once the 10- year period expires. Rooms for training and running groups will also be charged for however room space is already being paid for from the parenting, training and Early Help budget currently but these facilities will offer a community space accessible to families and will be hired for similar if not more cost -effective charges.
- 4.6 Welshpool Family Centre & Childcare at Oldford School: This project is already approved. Work has been delayed because construction of the new school in Welshpool was put on hold due to Covid-19. However, the new school will open in January 2021, allowing us to take over the vacated Oldford school site and begin refurbishment work to turn it into a family centre. The financial forecast and finances review has been completed for Oldford. The running costs have been calculated from actual figures provided by school services in addition to figures from Newtown integrated family centre due to its comparable space and usage. A detailed forecast has been produced and we are confident that the commitment we have agreed from our partners to secure desk and meeting space, in addition to the rental from open door nursery and income generated from the rental of meeting spaces will provide us with enough income to run the building.
- 4.7 The remaining Hubs planned for Ystradgynlais and Llandrindod Wells are not yet in progress although work has been ongoing, identifying suitable locations. The matter of revenue costs will need to be resolved through the Start Well Board before these projects are progressed.
- 4.8 The Head of Finance (Section 151 Officer) notes the content of the report. The resources section highlights that targeting resources in this way, across agencies, not only improves outcomes but reduces and avoids future higher costs. It is also highlighted that the provision is currently being significantly supported by grant funding, this poses a risk for the service should the funding cease.

## **5. Legal implications**

- 5.1 This report builds upon the ethos of The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and demonstrates the commitment of Powys County Council to deliver comprehensive services for children and families within Powys. The Social Care Legal Team continue to support and advise where appropriate and requested.
- 5.2 The Head of Legal and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) has commented as follows "I note the legal comment and have nothing to add to the report"

## **6. Data Protection**

- 6.1 The delivery of services, and collaboration proposed will require that all personal data is processed, including being shared, lawfully and transparently, and should be supported by relevant records of processing activities.

## **7. Human Resources:**

- 7.1 HR will provide support and guidance as and when required.

## **8. Comment from local member(s)**

- 8.1 (insert here any comments received from local Members on the subject matter)

## **9. Integrated Impact Assessment**

- 9.1 See attached document.

## **10. Recommendation**

- 10.1 Recommendation that the Early Help Strategy is approved by the Executive Cabinet.

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