

SOCIAL & HEALTH CARE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Thursday, 1 st July 2021
Report Subject	Early Years
Cabinet Member	Deputy Leader of the Council (Partnerships) and Cabinet Member for Social Services
Report Author	Service Manager (Early Years and Family Support)
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To provide an update on the strategic and operational priorities in relation to early years and the Early Years and Family Support Service, including the contribution to the Council's statutory duties, collaboration with partners and future priorities.

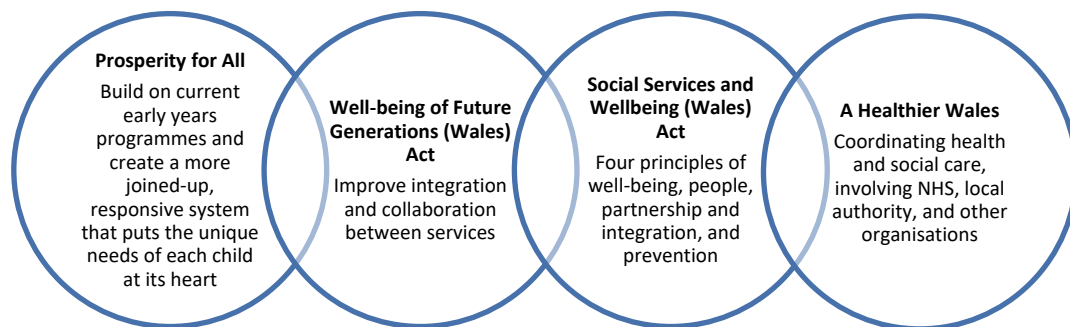
RECOMMENDATIONS

1	The Committee supports the approach to Early Years and Family Support provision, and collaborations with key partners, and future development of an Early Years Strategy.
2	The Committee consider the progress and impact being achieved through Welsh Government capital funding.
3	The Committee supports the development of programmes with a strong evidence base of impact and cost effectiveness when commissioning early years and early intervention services. And that the council and partners continue to develop its own local evidence base to support positive early intervention.
4	The Committee supports the refresh of the Parenting in Flintshire Parenting Programmes Framework, and action should be taken to raise awareness and the benefits of parenting programmes with key partners so that there is an increase in accessibility and availability of programmes that meet parent's needs.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	THE EARLY YEARS AND FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICE (EYFS)
1.01	<p>The EYFS Service provides multi-agency, multi-disciplinary services that support children and their families, across the continuum of need. There are a variety of programmes and teams that provide early years and family support, primarily to children pre-birth to age 7, with some elements focussing on services for older children.</p> <p>The aim is for all Flintshire children, from all backgrounds, to have the best start in life, as it is during the earliest years that a large part of the pattern of adult life is set, creating a foundation for the future. The Flintshire early years population, as at 2020 was 14,064 aged 0-7 year olds, of these 8,373 were aged 0-4 year, of which 1,286 were living in a Flying Start area. The focus is on improving outcomes for young children and their families by promoting child and family health; supporting quality relationships and family stability; reducing inequalities in child development; supporting children to be school ready; supporting parenting aspirations and parenting skills; and providing sufficient quality childcare to enable children to flourish, and support communities and the economy.</p> <p>Services are delivered in collaboration with partners committed to an integrated, multi-agency approach shaped by understanding of the locality and any specific complexities of each geographical area. The aim is to promote economies of scale, support improved services, experience and outcomes.</p>
1.02	<p>Financial Report</p> <p>The EYFS Service is 98.5% Welsh Government Grant funded, with 1.5% from Flintshire County Council base budget and income generation. The budget consists of both revenue and capital. In 2020-21 £19 million was administered.</p> <p>20 Grant Awards were planned for 1 April 2020-21. An additional 15 Grant Awards were bid for and received during the year including a new Child Development Fund (£173k), sustainability support for childcare settings (£128k) and additional childcare offer small capital (£122k), and early year's centres capital (£78k). One Grant Award was part-repurposed (£1.195k) to respond to the Covid-19. In total, approximately £2 million additional and repurposed funding during the year to the benefit of children, families and services.</p> <p>In collaboration with partners every aim is made to make the best use of funding opportunities. The challenge is the multiplicity of funding streams and eligibility which does carry an administrative burden on a number of staff due to Welsh Government requirements.</p>
1.03	<p>Priorities</p> <p>The strategic priorities for early years will continue to be driven via the Early Years Pathfinder partnership, with governance through the Public Service Board and the Health Wellbeing and Independence Board. The priorities for 2021-22 will build upon the work during 2020-21. The plan is:</p>

To continue to consider how legislation and policies underpin the work, and how those factor into early years integration and transformation approaches and activities. For example, changes made through the Early Years Pathfinder programme and the Children and Communities Grant Leadership Group are aimed at coordinating social care, health and third sector services around the need and preferences of individuals. This can only be done through effective engagement and collaboration – which align with some of the key principles in the Prosperity for All, Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act, the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act, a Healthier Wales and the, Building a Brighter Future: early years and childcare plan.



To continue to develop the early years system finding ways to improve multi-agency solutions, delivering accessible and simple information, clearer referral and application routes, with earlier intervention and prevention than was the case before the systems work started.

To continue to build upon the willingness to collaborate to deliver better outcomes for the child and family and move towards seamless provision, maximising on all funding streams and opportunities with the central focus on the child.

To continue to listen to the voice of parents as services are integrated and transformed through a systems thinking approach, focussing on the customer. To build on the work to date: early health support; speech, language and communication; no wrong door and the front door; ALNET and additional learning needs pre-school; Flying Start outreach and to further improve connections between services, removing complexity from the system.

To maintain the concerted effort to drive change at a strategic level, including the results from the baseline assessment using the Early Intervention Midwifery and Early Years Services Maturity Matrix. To finalise the Flintshire vision, service mapping and population data and develop an Early Years Strategy that will articulate the priorities. Parental and community participation are planned for later in the year to inform the priorities and focused campaigns.

Whilst there remain challenges and areas for further development, an external evaluation has validated the positive impact so far of the multi-agency early year's services, interventions and partnership collaboration. The findings of the report, along with the Early Intervention Foundation report due end of July, will be used to contribute to the strategic ambition to collaborate and develop an even greater partnership between early years, health, third sector and community so that together Flintshire's children have the best start in life.

<p>1.04</p>	<p>Early Years Pathfinder</p> <p>A multi-agency approach, in partnership with families, local authority, health, public health, education and third sector staff.</p> <p><i>“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 economic success of Wales.</i></p> <p><i>To build on our current early years programmes and create a more joined up, responsive system that puts the unique needs of each child at its heart”.</i></p> <p>Welsh Government funding for 2020-21 has continued, and has enabled the continuation of an Early Years Pathfinder Coordinator, who is coordinating the following work programme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying the population and their needs • Reviewing the current system to support integration and transformation, and take appropriate action (using the Vanguard systems methodology) and applying the principles of the Social Services and Wellbeing Act (Wales) 2014 and other key programmes including the Healthy Child Wales. • Working together to explore how early years services might be reconfigured within existing budgets, delivering services in a coordinated, integrated and timely way • Establishing a baseline assessment across the Early Years system and agreeing key priorities, using the Early Intervention Foundation Midwifery and Early Years Maturity Matrix • Developing an Early Years Strategy • Developing an Early Years Workforce Strategy to support the sector to deliver quality services <p>The strategic delivery of early years is aligned to the Public Service Board aims and the Council Plan and is being led through the Early Years Pathfinder Strategic Partnership.</p> <p>The early years system operates across the continuum of need, from universal to complex need and requires collaboration with key partners to develop an integrated early years delivery model, Strategy and Framework, working in partnership with health, social care, education, third sector and early years childcare providers (settings) and professionals.</p>
<p>1.05</p>	<p>Relationships Matter</p> <p>Continuing to build upon small grants received near the end of the financial year, for the past three years. It has provided opportunities for focussing on relationships and their importance to family stability and quality of life. Tavistock Relationships have been commissioned by Welsh Government to support a baseline assessment and increase the skills, knowledge and resources of the parenting and wider workforce with methods and techniques to manage inter-parental conflict. And several programmes are being piloted with partners including Break4Change; Who’s in Charge; OnePlusOne digital relationship courses; as well as the Solihull approach available digitally.</p>

	<p>A survey has been developed and will be used as a baseline assessment for knowledge, skills and service availability (June - July 2021). The work is built on the premise that quality relationships throughout life are a right, not a privilege and relationships are one of the most important aspects of people's life. Couple, family and social relationships hold the key to good parenting, educational attainment, mental and physical wellbeing and ensuring quality of life. It is hoped that this work will begin a systems change approach that recognises quality relationships as a core shared objective across all areas of service delivery in Flintshire.</p> <p>The work will be overseen by the Children and Communities Lead Officer Group.</p>
1.06	<p>Flying Start and Flying Start Outreach (Health; Parenting; Speech, Language and Communication; Quality Childcare; Outreach)</p> <p>The programme continues to provide multi-agency, co-located services to a maximum of 1407 (+/- 10%) 0 - 4 year olds, and their families. During 2020-21 a further 285 children aged over 4 years received continuing support due to school closures and disruption of transition to school. The programme continues to build on the Outreach work, for children requiring services, but who live outside of the Flying Start areas. This is continuing to develop as focus is given to the early year's integration and transformation, the Front Door, no wrong door and early help. The service continues to build upon its strengths, being adaptive and innovative during some very challenging times for staff and service delivery, however, new partnerships, collaborations and adaptations have seeded and grown across the four elements: health; parenting; speech, language and communication and early childcare.</p> <p>There were 99 first time parents receiving Flying Start services during the year, and work is necessary to understand the impacts on expectant and new parents during the pandemic and the longer term impacts on children and their families and how this can be mitigated.</p> <p>The level of exposure to speech and language development in early years is particularly important because acquisition of language is so fast paced during this period. It is important that children are not left behind and that they are given rich opportunities to develop their language skills through nurturing relationships, play and exploration. A focus will continue on speech, language and communication.</p> <p>Through Welsh Government funding capital programmes have been completed in Holywell Flying Start; Westwood Family Centre, Buckley and Sealand Youth and Community Centre with a new modular for Aston Family Centre, scheduled for July 2021 to replace the old building. The end of year highlight report is attached.</p>
1.07	<p>Early Years Support (3-4 Year Old Childcare Offer; Early Entitlement; Childcare Development; Childcare Sufficiency Assessment)</p> <p>The team have been involved in local and national developments, including two system reviews, the first focussing on childcare grants for childcare and play, sustainability, and additional support and the second, additional support and learning needs for pre-school children. This has created</p>

	<p>efficiencies and simplified the approach. The work will progress into 2021-22.</p> <p>Uptake of the childcare offer was disrupted during the year due to Covid-19, however, substantial funding was repurposed to provide support for 643 critical workers children and 109 vulnerable pre-school children. This required the development of a new in-house system within 3 days, and the collaboration between Flying Start, Early Entitlement and Early Years Support. The system was developed further to provide support to vulnerable 5 – 8 year olds during the summer holidays. This will form the basis of the moderation panel and additional support process being developed.</p> <p>Flintshire is involved with Welsh Government in the development of a national Childcare Offer system scheduled for implementation mid-2022. The team have administered £622k of Small Capital Grant funding (Covid and Non-Covid) to childcare providers which has made a real difference to the quality of childcare provision and community assets and administered a further £97k to assist with Covid sustainability.</p> <p>They have worked with Welsh Government to pilot the Foundation Phase Early Entitlement £4.50 rate, to align with the Childcare Offer rate. This has brought additional funding into Flintshire. By aligning the rate for non-maintained settings, it has brought stability to the sector and ensured that parents use both the Childcare Offer and Early Entitlement for their child, supporting school readiness. Welsh Government has announced that they will fund the £4.50 Early Entitlement rate for the whole of Wales starting from the Spring Term 2021, and the childcare offer and early entitlement rate will continue to be aligned.</p>
1.08	<p>Family Information Service Flintshire (FISF) and Rural North Wales Family Centre</p> <p>The statutory duties for FIS are set out in the <i>Childcare Act 2006 Guidance (Section 27)</i> with the information to be provided and who it should be provided to. In practice, FISF collate and offer a wide range of information to all members of the public, regardless of their age or status, and also work closely with professionals engaged with families to provide information which may directly or indirectly be used for the benefit of the family or the professional services engaged in supporting families. This year has seen the further development of the Dewis system and development of an analytical dashboard to help identify enquiries, population needs and gaps in information and services. The small team are involved in development of the well-being tile on new FCC Digital Hub.</p> <p>They have seen further development information channels including social media, Twitter and Facebook. The enquiries this year have been just under 100,000; 50% being for childcare, the childcare offer, foundation phase and school admissions. This is an increase of 50% over two years.</p>
1.09	<p>Community Parenting Support</p> <p>Parenting programme delivery was reduced during the earlier part of the year, however, redesign and virtual platforms have made some delivery possible. And has increased accessibility for some parents. A number of</p>

	<p>new, currently funded, digital programmes have been introduced, as well as the new project, Empowering Parents, Empowering Communities (EPEC).</p> <p>EPEC 'Being a Parent' group programme was introduced during 2020-21. It is an evidenced based programme facilitated by recruited and trained volunteers with the support of a skilled Coordinator funded through the Early Years Pathfinder, core funding and income generation. The results have been extremely positive, seeing impact on community resilience. Parents attending the first two groups fed back that they really did not know that the facilitators were volunteers, and more parents are interested in becoming volunteers. They also gain qualifications for training and attending.</p> <p>This digital offer will be further enhanced during this year to include relationship programmes developed through the national organisation OnePlusOne. The three interventions are: Me, You and Baby Too; Coping with stress and alcohol '(How to Argue Better); Getting it right for children. A number of staff have been trained as Train the Trainer, however no further capacity has been provided and it needs to be considered how best to take this forward.</p> <p>The Flintshire Parenting Framework 2019 requires updating to reflect the new evidence based programmes and the updated training programme for the parenting workforce. This includes increasing knowledge and awareness of early years brain development e.g. GroBrain and Solihull parenting programmes: Understanding your pregnancy (available in Welsh and English); Understanding your Baby (E&W); Understanding your child (E&W); Understanding your teenager's brain (E&W); Understanding your brain (for teenagers) and more recently Understanding your child with additional needs. A refreshed copy will be available late 2021.</p>
1.10	<p>Flintshire Crèche and Childcare Service (FCCS)</p> <p>The FCCS has been remodelled during the year with a new registration with the Childcare Inspectorate for Wales (CIW). The Governance will be the local authority structure and does not require a separate committee to be established.</p> <p>The FCCS will offer two types of service: relief work for one to one and sessions under 2 hours (and longer within the eligibility of the National Minimum Standards for Childcare) and a local authority childcare provision. It will be self-sustaining, and any funds will be required to be rolled over each year, to cover redundancy and ongoing sustainability of the service. Funds will be capped, to ensure money is reinvested into the service and to support other childcare and service development.</p> <p>The Garden City provision is planned to open September 2021 and will be an authority run provision. It has the agreement of Education and Youth colleagues and it will be necessary to put a licence agreement in place for the long term use of the building. The capital works have provided benefits to the community through securing the external site and updating of the kitchen and seating facilities.</p>

	This FCCS provides essential quality childcare to support the delivery of many Flintshire programmes including Flying Start and Families First parenting. And is also considering new opportunities as the model develops.
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2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	The EYFS Service is 98.5% Welsh Government Grant funded, with 1.5% from Flintshire County Council base budget and income generation. The budget consists of both revenue and capital. In 2020-21 £19 million was administered.

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
3.01	<p>There are no immediate financial implications for Flintshire County Council.</p> <p>The evidence of the impact of Covid-19 and lockdown on child development shows that children have been negatively impacted during this period. Children from poorer backgrounds and those with additional needs have been disproportionately affected by closure of settings and schools during lockdown. Covid is widening the gap. (Build Back Fairer Marmot 2020).</p> <p>Due to the impact of structural and social inequalities, often the root cause of many of the issues that face children and families it is anticipated that the early years will continue to be a priority of the Welsh Government and to support the challenges of recovery will see continued funding, such as the Child Development Fund (April – Sept 2021).</p>

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	<p>Consultations have been undertaken with key partners to form the baseline assessment for the Midwifery and Early Years Maturity Matrix.</p> <p>It is aimed to do further consultations during 2021-22 to identify service and population needs to support the development of the Early Years Strategy and Model.</p>

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Flintshire Flying Start Highlight Report

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	Early Intervention Foundation Midwifery and Early Years Maturity Matrix Summary https://www.eif.org.uk/resource/eif-maturity-matrix-maternity-and-early-years

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	Contact Officer: Gail Bennett, Early Years and Family Support Manager Telephone: 01244 551052 E-mail: gail.bennett@flintshire.gov.uk

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	<p>(1) Early Years: children pre-birth to 7 years old.</p> <p>(2) Midwifery and Early Years Maturity Matrix: A self-assessment tool to support local areas to take a systems-wide approach to improving outcomes for children and families. To help local partners understand the position on early childhood intervention, identify areas for improvement, and work together to deliver change.</p> <p>(3) Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 Principles: The fundamental principles of the Act are voice and control - putting the 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; prevention and early intervention – increasing preventative services within the community to minimise the escalation of critical need; well-being – supporting people to achieve their own well-being and measuring the success of care and support; co-production and partnership – encouraging individuals to become more involved in the design and delivery of services.</p> <p>(4) Corporate Governance: the system by which local authorities direct and control their functions and relate to their communities. It is founded on the basic principles of openness and inclusivity, integrity and accountability together with the overarching concept of leadership. It is an inter-related system that brings together the underlying set of legislative requirements, governance principles and management processes.</p> <p>(5) Financial Year: the period of 12 months commencing on 1 April.</p> <p>(6) Revenue Support Grant: is paid to each Council to cover the cost of providing standard services less the council tax income at the standard level.</p>

(7) **Revenue:** a term used to describe the day to day costs of running Council services and income deriving from those services. It also includes charges for the repayment of debt, including interest, and may include direct financing of capital expenditure.

(8) **Capital:** a statement expressing the Council's policies and service levels in financial terms for a particular financial year. In its broadest sense it includes both the revenue budget and capital programme and any authorised amendments to them.

(9) **EPEC – Empowering Parents, Empowering Communities**

Programme and Test: The EPEC 'Being a Parent' group programme comprises eight two-hour sessions delivered over consecutive weeks. Groups are run by pairs of peer facilitators, in the community, and virtually, with each group being between 6-12 parents. The facilitators are trained using a comprehensive session-by-session manual. Fidelity in group delivery is further ensured through supervision meetings with the programme coordinator, and certification of meeting the quality standards prior to programme delivery. It is a cost-effective and accessible method for helping parents whose children are experiencing behavioural difficulties. The programme involves training parents to run parenting groups that use evidence-based techniques recommended by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE). The main aim of the test is to measure and decide the usefulness of EPEC in providing support to families, improving child behaviour and parenting skills, and decreasing stress.