

AGENDA SUPPLEMENT (1)

Meeting: Children's Select Committee

Place: Kennet Committee Room, County Hall, Trowbridge

Date: Tuesday 10 March 2020

Time: 10.30 am

The Agenda for the above meeting was published on 2 March 2020. Additional documents are now available and are attached to this Agenda Supplement.

Please direct any enquiries on this Agenda to Roger Bishton, of Democratic Services, County Hall, Bythesea Road, Trowbridge, direct line 01225 713035 or email roger.bishton@wiltshire.gov.uk

Press enquiries to Communications on direct lines (01225)713114/713115.

This Agenda and all the documents referred to within it are available on the Council's website at www.wiltshire.gov.uk

6 **Families and Children's Transformation (FACT) Programme: Impact and Outcomes for Young People** *(Pages 3 - 14)*

A report from the Director of Families and Children is attached.

7 **Schools Funding Briefing** *(Pages 15 - 16)*

An appendix to the report is attached.

8 **Youth Transport Task Group - Final Report** *(Pages 17 - 28)*

The final report of the task group is attached.

9 **Traded Services for Schools and Outdoor Education Task Group - Final Reports** *(Pages 29 - 46)*

The final reports of the Traded Services for Schools and Outdoor Education Task Group are attached.

13 **Forward Work Programme** *(Pages 47 - 52)*

A report on development of the council's fostering service is attached.

DATE OF PUBLICATION: 5 March 2020

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Wiltshire Council

Children's Select Committee

10 March 2020

Families and Children's Transformation (FACT) – Programme Update

Purpose of report

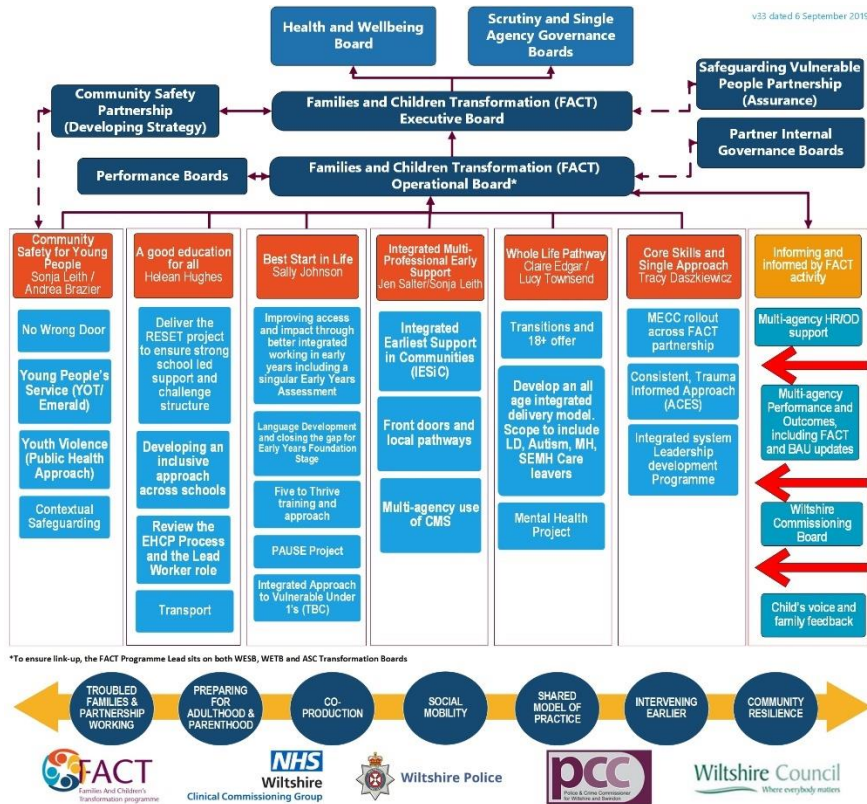
1. This is a regular update to the Children's Select Committee on progress and future plans.
2. This report will provide an update on the FACT Programme progress over the last twelve months and the future plans for each workstream. Since the report to the Children's Select Committee in March 2019 an additional workstream, **Community Safety for Young People**, has been added to the programme structure bringing back oversight of delivery of the Stronger Families Team (previously referred to as No Wrong Door) and the Young People's Service.

Background

3. The Families and Children's Transformation (FACT) Programme is designed to move to a systemic integrated practice model that is framed around intervening earlier and building resilience in our communities to support families to care effectively for their children.
4. As a transformational partnership programme, the benefits from the work undertaken will be shared across the whole system improving outcomes for the people of Wiltshire.
5. The Families and Children's Transformation (FACT) Programme was set up in early 2018 to deliver whole system change based on a set of five driving principles.
6. Whilst the five driving principles have remained broadly the same, following the completion of several key elements of the programme towards the end of 2018/early 2019 plus a partnership day to identify key shared priorities, the programme was slightly restructured.
7. Successes from the original programme include the delivery of the **Early Support Hub** to support cases that do not meet the current thresholds for MASH intervention and the **Diagnostic and Referral Tool (DART)** which supports the holistic identification of early need, signposting and identifying sources of support. An assessment of the impact of the introduction of the Early Support Hub will be undertaken over the next few months and reported back via the MASH annual performance review in May 2020.
8. In early 2019 the partnership Programme Board was reorganised into an Operational Board and Executive Board to facilitate a greater level to

transparency of the programme decision making and ensure decisions relating to commissioning and resourcing across the partnership could receive the appropriate scrutiny.

- In May 2019, the Executive Board reviewed the revised structure for the programme and approved it with the addition of a workstream looking a **Community Safety for Young People**.



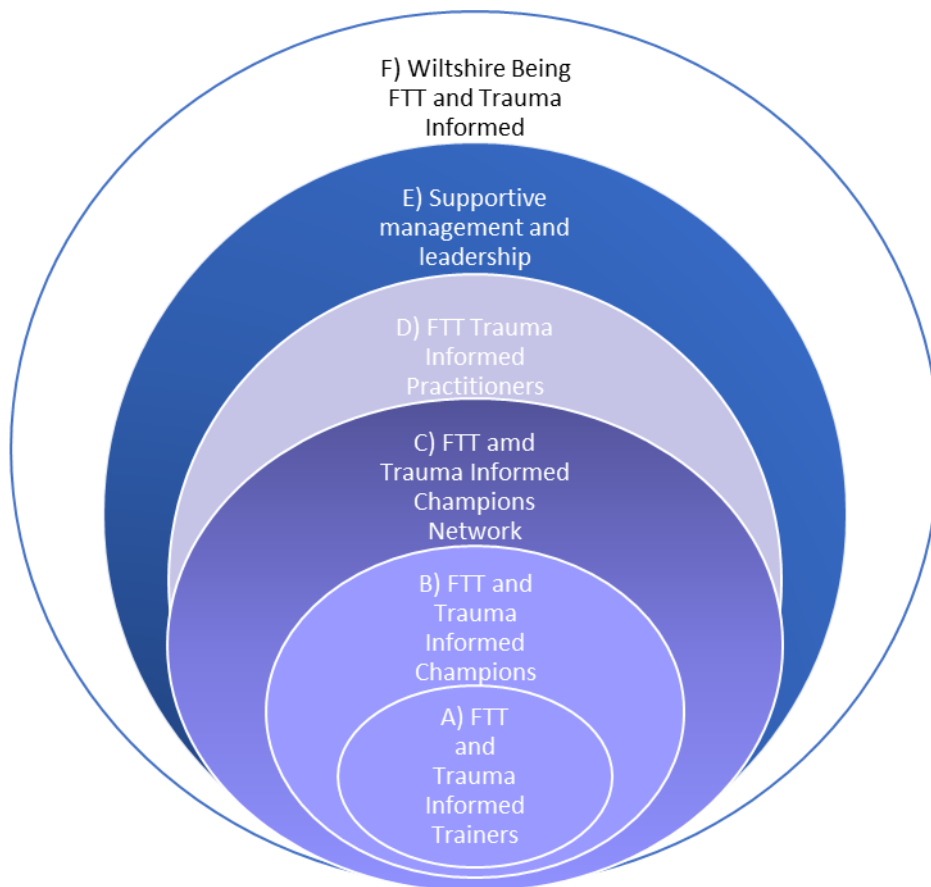
- Both the Operational Board and the Executive Board operate with a rotating chair and whilst this is currently with the Director for Families and Children's Services and the Chief Executive Officer – People respectively, this will rotate to a police or health colleague during spring 2020. This shared leadership of the boards support the Systems Leadership approach being developed within the Core Skills and Single Approach workstream. The approach is based on a pyramid effect with a foundation of trust, without which people/organisations are unable to move onto the next level of constructive conflict and so on. Seeing the whole and developing relationships are a key driver within all the workstreams of the FACT Programme.

Main considerations for the committee

- Workstream One – **Community Safety for Young People**, will focus on developing and delivering services for children and young people at risk of exploitation.

12. The workstream will also see completion of the delivery of the **Stronger Families Team** (formally **No Wrong Door**) through Ofsted registration of the residential element of the service during spring 2020. This will provide a short-term emergency place for young people 10-17 to stay to rebuild familial relationships or provide an opportunity to stabilise an existing placement. The aim is to avoid taking young people into care unnecessarily by providing wrap around intensive support.
13. The outreach element of the service has seen some significant improvements for some young people with reductions in suicide attempts and missing episodes. The FACT Executive Board has agreed to an independent evaluation of the service which will demonstrate achievement against outcomes and also provide the business case for partners to review the multi-agency temporary support that has been embedded into the service with a view to making this a longer term arrangement.
14. The new **Young People's Service** combining the Youth Offending Team and Emerald CSE Team and Stronger Families plans to go live in spring 2020. Drafting of new role descriptions for specialist workers is underway and recruitment has commenced. The function of the new team will expand to become a case holding service with a stronger focus on the development of tools around child criminal exploitation (CCE).
15. The **Young People's Service** will also use the **Contextual Safeguarding** approach as one of its core practice methodologies. The work with the University of Bedfordshire is ongoing and Wiltshire is being seen as a pioneer in some areas of its approach which is being promoted jointly by the FACT Programme and the Safeguarding Vulnerable People's Partnership. Introductory briefing sessions on the approach to improve how we work together across the partnership to protect young people at risk of exploitation started in October and will run until the end of this month. More detailed training sessions will be run throughout 2020 and then be embedded in business as usual activity.
16. Workstream two – **A Good Education for All**, has delivered against some of the recommendations within the **RESET** project (Reshaping Education and Skills, Regeneration and Major Projects) in restructuring some of the internal services to better align to the current working relationships both within the Council and externally with schools and partners. Work has taken place to ensure there is a robust school effectiveness service and there will also be a focus on work readiness and engagement with local businesses to identify and promote the skills required to support Wiltshire's economy.
17. Regular Headteacher briefing sessions have were introduced in September 2019 and have been accessible via webcast to improve participation by those schools who may find it difficult to release staff to attend a face-to-face session. The briefings are run in the same format from Monday to Thursday in one week and will be repeated termly. This has given the project lead for the **Inclusive Approach across Schools** the opportunity to begin engagement with schools. This has been followed up with ongoing one to one visits to individual schools to discuss current issues and the future approach that will be co-produced with schools.

18. The **Inclusive Approach** project will also incorporate the review of the Education Health and Care plan processes and role of the SEND Lead Worker which has previously been a separate project. Bringing these together will ensure consistent conversations take place with schools about the roles for those supporting people with the most complex needs in the early years and school environments.
19. The **Transport** project will be re-energised moving into 2020 following actions so far including updating routing software to make journeys more efficient and beginning a review of entitlements to passenger assistants. There is further work that can be done and this will be scoped over the next few months.
20. Workstream three – **Best Start in Life** has been making significant partnership progress in engaging staff across the early years sector in developing a multi-agency approach to speech, language and communication. Several whole workstream meetings have been held and will continue to be held on a regular basis to maintain and improve engagement. Improving outcomes in this area will have significant long-term impact across the whole system.
21. There has been significant progress in developing a bespoke training model for **Five to Thrive** which will also incorporate **Trauma Informed** awareness training. The model has been developed with Kate Cairns Associates (KCA) and an implementation plan has been developed.
22. The training is called **Five to Thrive: Attachment, Trauma and Resilience** and to respond to the diverse areas of focus of the 0-19 workforce the training will be slightly tailored to ensure the training speaks to different staff groups. Training dates are being identified for 12 Champion training courses over the next year and the ambitious programme will train up to 600 Champions in the first year with up to 25 Champions later progressing to become trainers making the model sustainable to rollout. The trainers will cascade a light touch version of the course to the wider workforce.
23. The training programme is jointly funded across the FACT partnership and those contributing have agreed for approximately 10% of Champion spaces to be made available to voluntary sector partners. An illustration of the model is set out below:



| |
|---|
| FTT Champions and Trainers make up the Network |
| FTT Practitioners are trained by the trainers |
| Supportive management and leadership enables Wiltshire to Be Five to Thrive |

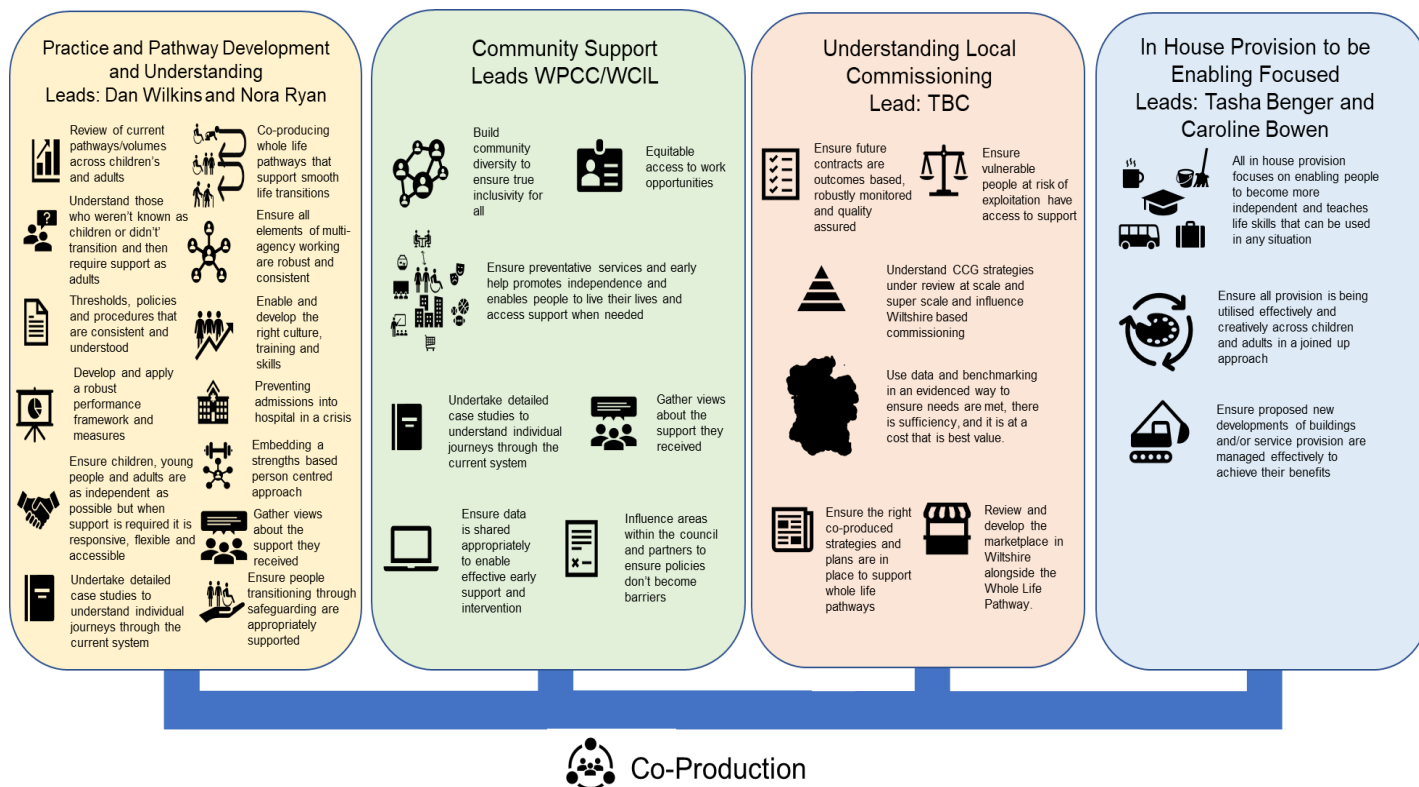
- 24. In October an **Early Years Needs Assessment** commenced and as part of a holistic assessment of the needs of expectant parents and families with children 0-5, a series of focus groups will be held in different parts of the county with a range of parents to find out their views on early years services. They will be asked what works well, what are the challenges, where are the gaps and what are the opportunities. This feedback will contribute to a holistic assessment of the needs of children under 5 and their families which will inform future developments.
- 25. In June 2019, the **PAUSE Project** was brought under the strategic governance of the FACT Programme. The project is an intense 18-month relationship based programme of therapeutic and practical support for women who have had or are at risk of having multiple children removed from their care.
- 26. Following a national model, the team have completed one 18-month cycle and based on a cohort of 18 women participating in the project with 55 children removed between them, the estimated cost avoidance of having additional children taken into care had they not been on the programme is just over £1m.
- 27. There is also a wider impact on the rest of the system as practitioners work to:

- Improve access to appropriate services thereby reducing A&E visits and fewer missed appointments
 - Develop relationships with housing providers to prevent homelessness and avoid the costs of homelessness
 - “Hold” women pending mental health assessments/groups/interventions helped to reduce disengagement or further decline
 - Reduce anti-social behaviour and/or police callouts
28. The project is now working with the second cohort of women and is seeking to expand the number of practitioners to boost access to the service for a larger group of women at the point of first removal of a child. However, this is reliant on partnership commitment to funding.
29. Workstream four – **Integrated Multi-Professional Early Support** has consolidated the learning from a number of the project that were running under the FACT Programme.
30. The key project within this workstream is **Integrated Earliest Support in Communities (IESiC)** which is co-producing a system wide response to closing the gaps around early support. There has been significant engagement locally via workshops and the establishment of a strategic group plus the identification and local engagement of partners in the first identified innovation site – Calne.
31. Following this engagement, including presentations at the Headteacher briefing sessions in September the project is recommending via a mandate through the FACT governance a three-part solution to the Integrated Earliest Support in Communities Offer:
- a. **A Wiltshire platform** to centralise information of all support in communities by community type, age range etc.
 - b. **A community connecting function to**
 - Build relationships with the person/family – establish needs
 - Provide information, outreach support and bring in appropriate support (professional or volunteer) via introductions and ‘warm handovers’
 - Remain as Single Point of Contact and stays connected with the person/family until they feel they do not need the support anymore/ hand holding
 - Update and maintain the local information on the platform
 - Work with the community to highlight, overcome and escalate gaps in provision
 - c. **A central community development function** to work across the community areas through joint partnership community commissioning for consistency, sharing of good initiatives (where demand informs) and support in achieving desired outcomes in terms of filling gaps and eliminating duplication in resources.

32. Approval of the principles has been given so further detailed work is being undertaken to co-produce the business cases and implementation plans to support the three elements which could be delivered concurrently or as standalone solutions.
33. The **Front Door and Local Pathways** group organised and ran a series of **Early Support Roadshows** earlier in the year and have been reviewing the feedback and preparing an update which was set from the autumn. Work is also ongoing on the implementation plan for the new **Early Support Assessment** which will replace the **Common Assessment Framework (CAF)** in 2020. The implementation plan will be presented to the FACT Operational Board in February 2020. Work is being done to review progress on aligning local authority and partner front doors since the introduction of the **Early Support Hub** in March 2019 to identify any additional work that can be done to further streamline the current experience.
34. A Partner Engagement Officer has been in post since the beginning of September to progress the **Multi-Agency Use of CMS** project. There has been significant engagement work to recruit 5 schools and a number of partner agencies to run a trial of access to the delegation portal which will make it simpler and quicker for partner agencies to contribute towards joint working on a child's case. Submissions will be stored securely in the system and can be accessed by them at any time. It is anticipated that the trial will start in early 2020 once the necessary information governance and technical requirements have been met by those taking part. The pilot will provide valuable data that will be fed into the business case for full rollout to all interested partners.
35. Workstream five – **Whole Life Pathway** through two workshops in April and May 2019 has defined its vision to ***enable people through all stages of life to reach their potential to live happy, healthy, safe and rewarding lives within their communities regardless of ability*** with an aspiration to be the best county empowering people to live independently, adventurously and safely by 2022.
36. The Whole Life Pathway workstream will cover pathways that will touch on a number of different groups of people with varying needs and support requirements. The groups outlined below are considered as in scope for the programme of work which will be delivered over a series of phases:
 - a. Learning Disabilities;
 - b. Mental Health (dependencies - including peri-natal mental health and social emotional mental health);
 - c. Autism;
 - d. Care Leavers;
 - e. Transitional Safeguarding (including care leavers, secondary needs risk of offending, drugs/alcohol, Learning Disabilities & Mental Health, those at risk of sexual/criminal exploitation)
 - f. Multiple/Complex needs (including physical Impairment and cognitive needs - secondary long-term life limiting conditions).
37. The following are considered out of scope for the workstream but there will dependencies or interfaces with the pathways/services for these people:
 - a. Dementia

- b. Education Health and Care Plans
- c. Looked after Children
- d. Physical disability without cognitive needs.

38. the workstream has been broken down into four distinct project areas with leads identified for all but one:



- 39. Recruitment of a **Whole Life Pathway lead** is underway to lead and strengthen the capacity to shape and take this workstream forward. The aim is to co-produce pathways with staff, partners, service users (adult, children and young people) and their parents and carers and have a **joint (health and social care) commissioning strategy** underpinning them. This will reflect the need to provide services for individuals who are on the Autism Spectrum and those who may require access to other specialist mental health provision.
- 40. There is crossover with other workstreams within the FACT Programme and also external pieces of work such as the BSW Mental Health Programme which will be carefully monitored and managed to ensure no duplication of work occurs and opportunities can be maximised to influence commissioning and operational decisions.
- 41. There will be a strong focus within the worksteam on transitions from childhood into adulthood for local authority, partner and commissioned services. This work crosses both the **Whole Life Pathway** and the **Good Education for All** workstreams with consultation on the new **Preparation for Adulthood Policy and Procedure** taking place during November 2019 to January 2020 with a view to signing off the policy through the FACT governance boards in March 2020.
- 42. Transitions work extends to mental health services through the strengthening of the **crisis care pathway** between Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services delivered by Oxford Health and adult mental health services delivered by AWP

(Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership) including links to the BSW crisis care workstream.

43. The **CAMHS Local Transformation Plan** update has been signed off jointly by the Health and Wellbeing Board chair in conjunction with the FACT Operational Board. Ultimately this will be replaced by the aspirations of the NHS Long Term plan which sets out a vision to strengthen and develop services to children and young people with the introduction of a 16-25 service model.
44. The trailblazer bid jointly with the CCG for **Mental Health Support Teams** in schools was successful and implemented from January 2020 for two teams covering the Salisbury/Devizes and Trowbridge/Westbury areas. Feedback from the trailblazers will develop NHSE's national model for the future.
45. Recommissioning of early mental health support services for children and young people is underway and will be live in April 2020. This will include expanded access to counselling services across primary schools and via GP surgeries for secondary school pupils plus the ability to access online counselling services currently provided through Kooth Counselling.
46. The Whole Life Pathway will also have a focus on how the current adult mental health social work team can support effective transition for children and young people who require mental health support as they transition to adulthood.
47. The Whole Life Pathway approach will also consider our capacity to provide support to parents who have mental health difficulties and learning disabilities, for example where someone's mental health is a barrier to them caring for their child effectively, how can adult social care mental health (and CTPLD) teams work better to support the adult parent, where appropriate with Families and Children to reduce family breakdown.
48. The Commissioning Lead will also need to work with Public Health to develop a prevention/early intervention strategy to look at what resources we have in communities to prevent and delay people developing long term mental health disorders. This needs to be done in conjunction with the CCG as part of their Thrive transformation work.
49. There will also be a focus on building resilience in local communities to enable people to live as independently and safely as possible without having to live in institutions sometimes out of Wiltshire. This will dovetail with the work being done within the **IESiC project** ensuring gaps are identified and addressed for those with more complex needs and vulnerabilities. Recognising the value of the voluntary sector organisations and links with people and their communities the leads for the Community Support project are Wiltshire Parent Carer Council and Wiltshire's Centre for Independent Living.
50. The Whole Life Pathway workstream is an extensive piece of work which will take two to three years to complete in order to fully co-produce services with people with lived experience and meet the requirements of the population of Wiltshire now and into the future.

51. Workstream six – **Core Skills and Single Approach** will support the development of the county's workforce and volunteers and achieve a culture change across the whole system.
52. Following the FACT Programme Board attending a Systems Leadership day in October 2018 a project group has been established to look at how the model can be rolled out across the partnership starting with a focus on senior management. The challenge in some areas will be to sell the value of attending this training which may be similar to training senior leaders may have already undertaken.
53. Proposals are currently being developed and costed and are due to come through the FACT governance boards for sign off in Spring 2020.
54. The **Making Every Contact Count (MECC)** training continues to be rolled out across the partnership and the **Trauma Informed Practice** work will initially delivered through the **Five to Thrive: Attachment, Trauma and Resilience** as set out above.
55. The role of FACT Programme Lead has been taken by Simon Thomas who starts with the council on 2 March 2020. The role will be jointly funded between the council, CCG and police and Simon will split his time between the three main offices to strengthen the multi-agency discussions around priorities and impact moving forward.
56. One of the Lead's first tasks will be to review the current version of the **FACT Partnership Strategy** and ensure that it is fully inclusive of the partnership priorities moving forward and setting out the collective ambitions around funding and resource requirements for current and future work. The strategy will then go for sign off through the relevant authorities.
57. There will also be a review of the current programme to ensure that the work being undertaken will enable the priority outcomes to be delivered.

Safeguarding Considerations

58. The programme will improve joint working with partners and we hope to achieve integration in certain areas leading to improved practice and thus outcomes, protecting children from harm.
59. This includes working with adult services and housing differently, and commissioning services more effectively which would contribute positively in the safeguarding of vulnerable children and adults.
60. One of the principles of the Programme is focused on providing a more intensive response to families at an earlier point when needs arise in order to prevent them escalating into statutory services. This is reflected in a number of the projects within the programme where an earlier multi-agency response with a consistent lead professional and an improved system of information sharing will result in more stable, resilient families.
61. Throughout the system change via the projects within the programme statutory responsibilities around safeguarding will be maintained

62. The programme works closely with Public Health colleagues and will lead to improved health of the local child and adult population. The new services support the holistic identification of a child and family’s needs and an integrated approach to supporting them to achieve positive change – this leads to improved health and wellbeing.

Environmental impact of the proposal

63. Currently within the programme there is little anticipated impact on carbon emissions. This will be considered separately for each project during the scoping and planning phase.

Equality and diversity impact of the proposal

64. Operational Children’s Services work with our most vulnerable children and families including those impacted by poverty and facing inequality.

65. The programme support and contributes to the Council’s commitment to:

- Tackle inequalities and promote cohesive communities
- Not to discriminate in the way we provide services to the public
- Not to discriminate in our employment related practices
- Promote equality and good relations between different groups

66. The programme, workstreams and projects will need to consider whether an equality impact assessment is required following the current advice and guidance

Risk assessment

67. Risks that may arise if the proposed decision and related work is not taken

| | |
|---|--|
| 1 | Inadequate change leads to significant service cut backs within the council adversely affecting the outcomes for children and families. |
| 2 | Insufficient resource available to prevent families’ difficulties escalating and in doing so, improve their outcomes and reduce demand for higher tier services. |
| 3 | Failure to exploit internal and external opportunities to eradicate duplication, simplify and integrate processes and improve multi-agency integrated working and collaboration. |

68. Risks that may arise if the proposed decision and actions that will be taken to manage those risks

| | Risk | Actions to mitigate |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Lack of cultural change across the partnership inhibits success of any transformational project | Staff and partners will be fully engaged in decision making, design and implementation processes. FACT Programme Lead post joint funded |
| 2 | Insufficient internal and external partner capacity to progress project work due to operational | Emphasise the key areas for partner engagement so coproduction is strongest in these areas and give |

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| | pressures | advance notice of meetings or deadlines |
| 3 | Lack of coproduction with children, young people and families results in limited improvement of their outcomes | Targeted engagement work will be undertaken to agree strategic opportunities to engage children and families in initial consultation work, including community engagement events, social media campaign, schools engagement and utilising of engagement contracts |

Financial implications

69. It is anticipated that the programme will ensure that the council can maximise impact within the existing budget position. This recognises that savings will need to be made year on year and the programme will support the delivery of those savings with a view to ensuring that the council delivers services that will improve outcomes for children and families, thereby, reducing ongoing demand.

Legal implications

70. Each project within the programme will assess the legal implications for its intended outcomes and ensure that appropriate legal advice has been sought prior to the decisions on services being made.

Options considered

71. Projects within the programme that require a strategic decision will produce a business case detailing the options that have been considered and rejected as well as a preferred recommendation.

Conclusion

72. The conclusions reached have taken into account all the above and the committee is asked to:
- a. Note the updates since the last report;
 - b. Note that a review of the programme is due to be undertaken to prioritise delivery of workstreams/project that will deliver significant system benefits.

Background papers

None

Appendices

None

Schools Forum - December 2019 - proposed schedule - will be finalised post DfE budget allocation

FORECAST FUNDING & RECOVERY ACTION PLANNING

| | 18-19 Outturn £M | 19-20 Forecast £M | 20-21 Forecast £M | 21-22 Forecast £M | 22-23 Forecast £M | |
|--|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|--|
| DSG Balance brought forward: | 0.846 | -2.060 | -8.695 | -9.427 | -9.016 | |
| Overall HNB allocation | 46.135 | 46.867 | 51.307 | 52.007 | 52.707 | |
| Academies element | 6.880 | 7.206 | tbc | tbc | tbc | Future allocations assume a small inflationary increase - however, re-base in 21/22 FY |
| Local Authority element | 38.127 | 38.533 | tbc | tbc | tbc | anticipated and increased proportion anticipated |
| Additional allocation (LA) | 1.128 | 1.128 | 4.440 | tbc | tbc | |
| Schools Block Transfer (0.8% 19/20 & est 1% 20/21) | | 2.200 | 3.000 | 4.000 | 5.000 | assume increases as school funding levels increase - not confirmed |
| CSSB Transfer | 0.263 | 0.334 | 0.220 | 0.110 | 0.110 | CSSB is reducing over time |
| HNB Overspend | 4.735 | 5.685 | 5.685 | 5.685 | 5.685 | assume flatline overspend - this will be challenging |
| Local Authority Contribution | 1.300 | tbc | tbc | tbc | tbc | |
| % Overspend across total HNB Allocation + transfers | 10% | 12% | 10% | 10% | 10% | |
| Variances on other funding blocks & EY adj on reserve | -0.529 | 0.950 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | |
| Number of EHCPS as at December 18,19 & forecast for 20 & 21 | 3,261 | 3,715 | 4,012 | 4,333 | 4,680 | Target - to reduce growth from 13% to 8% |
| Target - to reduce growth from 13% to 8% | | 13% | 8% | 8% | 8% | |
| Cost per annum per individual EHCP | £0.016 | £0.015 | £0.015 | £0.014 | £0.014 | |
| Projected Recovery Plans & Savings | | | | | | |
| Dyslexia friendly schools | - | - | -0.007 | -0.050 | -0.100 | |
| Inclusion and school effectiveness project | - | - | -0.800 | -1.000 | -1.000 | |
| ELP/RBs | - | - | -0.400 | -0.400 | -0.400 | |
| 10% reduction in spend value of NPAS | - | - | -0.574 | -0.574 | -0.574 | |
| 10% reduction in spend value of RB & ELP TOP UPS (not place funding) | - | - | -0.312 | -0.312 | -0.312 | Option 1 - with and Option 2 without |
| SEND assessment and EHCP | - | - | -1.000 | -1.000 | -1.000 | |
| Review of INMSS including commissioning challenge | - | - | -0.500 | -0.500 | -1.000 | |
| Post 16 Transition | - | - | -0.300 | -0.600 | -0.600 | |
| SEND AP project | - | - | -0.360 | -0.360 | -0.500 | |
| Digital solutions | - | - | -0.500 | -1.000 | -2.000 | |
| Early intervention and support project | - | - | -0.200 | -0.300 | -0.500 | |
| Total Estimated Working Group Savings Target | 0.000 | 0.000 | -4.953 | -6.096 | -7.986 | |
| DSG Balance (deficit) | -2.060 | -8.695 | -9.427 | -9.016 | -6.715 | |
| Movement on the DSG Balance | | -6.635 | -0.732 | 0.411 | 2.301 | improving over time but will take significant co-working / commitment |

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Wiltshire Council

Children's Select Committee

10 March 2020

Final Report of the Youth Transport Task Group

Purpose of the report

1. To present the findings and recommendations of the task group (TG) for endorsement by the committee and referral to the Cabinet Member for response.

Background

2. After being identified by the Children's Select Committee as a priority of the then Wiltshire Assembly of Youth (now the Wiltshire Youth Union) the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the committee requested a briefing document to outline the current public transport options available for youth across Wiltshire.
3. The briefing was received by the committee in January 2019. Following the item at this meeting the committee agreed to establish a TG (task group) to investigate the public transportation options available for young people in Wiltshire and to identify any potential areas for investigation and/or improvement and provide recommendations if necessary. It was agreed by the committee that the TG should also include a young person representative on their membership.

Terms of reference

4. The following terms of reference for the TG were endorsed by the Children's Select Committee on 16th July 2019:
 1. To investigate the current range of public transportation options available to young people in Wiltshire.¹
 2. To identify any unmet needs, gaps in service provision, and potential areas of improvement.
 3. To produce recommendations with a focus on the improvement of Wiltshire's public transport services for young people.

¹ The TG defines the term "young people" as aged up to 18 and up to 25 for care leavers and those living with SEND.

Membership

5. The TG comprised the following membership:

Cllr Mary Champion
Cllr Tony Jackson (Chairman)
Cllr George Jeans
Cllr Jim Lynch
Master Alfie Lowe (Young Person Representative)

Methodology

6. The TG met with the following witnesses:

Wiltshire Council:

Jason Salter, Head of Service Passenger Transport
Adrian Full, Transport Review Officer
Andrew Wickham, ICT, Innovation and Development Manager

External:

Harry Tipple, Head of Community and Business Development, Community First
Jaki Farrell, Charity Director, Seeds 4 Success
Sophie Martin, Community Rail Officer, TransWilts

7. The TG received the following evidence:

Child & Young Person Bus Fares and Public Transport in Wiltshire – Briefing Report

Presentation: Introducing the public transport options available to young people in Wiltshire

Additional Information on Young Person Public Travel

8. The TG met five times.

9. The TG's preliminary findings were discussed at the task group's meeting on 14 February 2020. The recommendations were also shared with the Executive.

Evidence - current range of public transportation options available to young people in Wiltshire

Wiltshire Council Offer

10. The TG noted that the free school transport was provided to meet the council's statutory obligations.

11. The council provided free school transport passes which covered travel to and from school, Monday to Friday, limited to term time for eligible pupils.

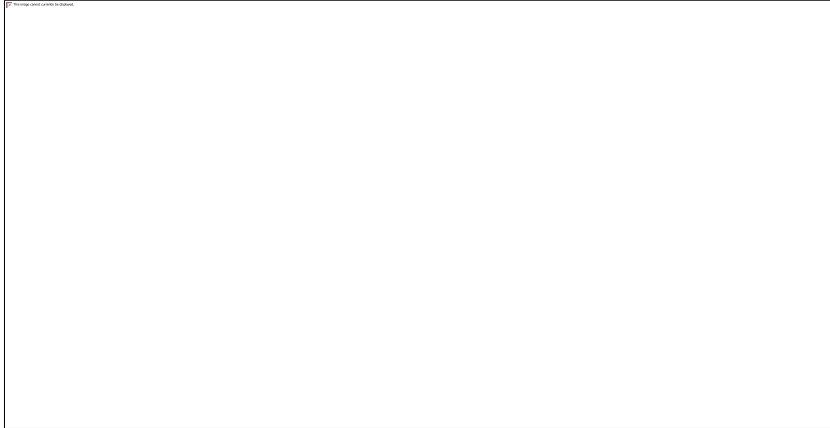
Unmet needs

12. The TG heard that perceived unmet needs included:
 - a. accessing before or after school activities,
 - b. travelling at weekends,
 - c. travelling during half-term and school holidays,
 - d. prohibitive cost of travelling for care leavers, and
 - e. accessing higher education and apprenticeship placements.
13. The provision of access to youth services, including leisure centres, was raised by the TG. It was explained that the bus passes do not cover more than two scheduled services to and from school. Thus, they cannot be used beyond these times to cover access to leisure centres or before and after-school clubs, even if a school has arranged to provide scheduled classes as part of the standard curriculum, but without prior agreement with the council to re-arrange transport.
14. The TG considered that before and after school clubs should be accessible for the most vulnerable. They considered that the restrictions on the free school bus passes constituted a cost barrier to accessing these services.
15. It was noted during discussion that to broaden free school transport political appetite would be required to make finance available. Officers estimated that the cost of this would be substantial (light touch estimates of millions of pounds).
16. It was also noted that where possible the Passenger Transport Unit would arrange for a school bus pass to be accepted on an ordinary bus service if one was available at no extra cost to the council. This would only be possible when the earlier or later bus was commercially run by the same bus operator contracted by the council to provide the school transport.
17. The TG also noted that the council operated a “spare seat” offer. Spare seats not used on a commissioned school transport could be purchased for students not entitled to free transport. Further details and fees can be accessed [here](#). This was currently operating on a “no fares” basis as vehicles used did not meet the Public Service vehicle Accessibility Regulations, therefore could not be a commercial service (i.e. less than 20% of passengers could be fee paying).
18. Post-16 education transport was described as a service still supported by Wiltshire Council which local authorities were not legally obliged to provide. This provided travel from home to school or college for Wiltshire residents. Transport was provided on any day when the school / college was open for normal lectures. The council reserved the right to select the most appropriate and / or economical mode of transport. The fee charged for the Post 16 travel scheme, for the school year 2019/20, was to be £781 or £231 if the gross household income was less than £20,819 for the year 2018/19. Further details and fees can be accessed [here](#).

19. The TG was informed that the scheme was not able to cover those on apprenticeships. It was also confirmed that the scheme was available for SEND students up to the age of 25. However, it was noted that many students with SEND required more personal transport.
20. The TG were informed many of those eligible for the post-16 education transport scheme chose to pay for commercial passes or tickets instead. This was because some bus companies offered season tickets at comparable or cheaper rates.
Staff at the Passenger Transport Unit would contact applicants if they considered that local bus companies may offer a better value ticket.
21. It was noted that there were currently around 600 students using the scheme which required a subsidy of £150,000 to run for the year. Out of the 600 students using the scheme 400 had purchased it on the lower rate of £231. All those aged 16 to 19 who lived at least three miles from one of their nearest study centres could apply for the scheme.
22. The Wiltshire Day Rover was a day travel pass co-ordinated by Wiltshire Council. There was no subsidy for the scheme and no revenue sharing. Bus companies participated on the basis that they would sell a similar number of tickets to those they accepted from other participants. The pass covered day travel across all providers in the area.
23. The cheapest day pass offered by a commercial bus operator was from First Bus (£3.50 on the bus or £3 via their app). It was noted that First Bus had expressed reservations over continuing future operations in Wiltshire. The next cheapest rate was from Faresaver (£4.50 for a day pass), but with limited network in the evenings and on Sundays.
Following this, the next cheapest rate was £4.90 from Stagecoach West.
24. At its last meeting on 14 February 2020 the TG was informed of four tranches of central government transport funding, three of which Wiltshire Council would be eligible to apply for. Although not directly related to youth transport, one funding would be for providing “enhancement to bus services” (i.e. increasing the number of journeys, etc.).

Public Bus Providers in Wiltshire

25. Bus providers offered fares that varied from provider to provider across the county. All the bus providers offered youth and student fares. It was noted by the TG that there was no dominant bus provider within the county. It was explained that legally Wiltshire Council were prohibited from reducing fares to compete with commercial services.



26. Of the bus miles provided in the county 50% were funded by Wiltshire Council with the other 50% provided by commercial services. Officers explained that drawing back on funding for public transport would create additional costs elsewhere.
27. The Traveline South West app, which was contributed to by Wiltshire Council offered a comprehensive travel planner with routes, times, and ticket costs. This app worked with all providers in Wiltshire. Online timetables were offered on all bus company websites, with physical timetables available from various locations including bus stations and libraries.
28. Many companies operating in Wiltshire offered phone-based apps to purchase tickets, along with many providers moving towards accommodating card-based payments on board.
29. The Bus Open Data scheme (Bus Services Act 2017), launching in 2020, legally obliged bus operators to feed into the scheme. The scheme would provide open information on bus travel hosted on a national Department for Transport platform, intending to help with travel planning, including relevant app development. (More information can be accessed [here](#))
30. It was noted by the TG that all bus drivers operate under a policy of never leaving a young person behind unaccompanied at a bus stop.

Other Local Authorities

31. The TG considered different examples of offers for young person bus travel passes provided by other local authorities, including:
 - a. The ability to use a free school bus pass to access youth services, including leisure centres, was provided by Kent County Council [*NB. This is no longer referenced on the Kent County Council's website*].
 - b. Kent County Council Travel Saver: from September 2019 - the cost was to be £350/year (or £100/year for low income) and would offer a 50% discount for parents and pupils on all Kent buses for travel between 6am - 7pm, Monday to Friday across all months excluding

August. This replaces a previous scheme which was used by 25,000 people at a cost of £8.5m to the council.

- c. "b_line" Pass (Derbyshire): This pass acted as a proof of age card to allow young people to access either: the under 16 discount; the 16-19 discount (25% off); or the apprentice discount (25% off). These were 24/7 discounts available on most bus and trains in the area.
- d. MyTicket (Merseyside): Day travel passes are available for those aged 5-18 at a rate of £2.20. Statistics were provided which showed that young people's bus usage had increased by 168% since the introduction of this scheme in July 2015, however it was noted it was not yet commercially sustainable [NB. Halton Transport (the council's owned bus company in Widnes) collapsed in January 2020 and the costs of operating the MyTicket scheme was cited as one of the reasons for its demise in this [news article](#)].

Community First – Wheels 2 Work and LINK schemes

32. The TG were informed about the Community First-led Wheels 2 Work Moped Scheme aiming to provide transport to work or training for participants aged 17 or over and living in Swindon or Wiltshire. The scheme provided mopeds at a cheap rental cost with insurance paid for.
33. Take-up of the Wheels 2 Work scheme was incredibly low, with only 2 participants at the time of the TG's work and required significant investment to provide new scooters and promote the scheme. The TG heard from Community First that they were considering dissolving the scheme, which has subsequently happened.
34. The TG was informed that the money allocated for the Wheels 2 Work scheme had been reallocated to the LINK schemes.
35. TG members heard that there were 43 "LINK Schemes" operating and supported by Community First across Wiltshire. These schemes were grant funded by Wiltshire Council. However, the schemes were heard to be focused on supporting the most vulnerable in society, rather than youth transport. Out of the 53,000 journeys completed in 2018 a total of 33,000 were health related.

Seeds 4 Success

36. Seeds 4 Success (S4S) owned a single minibus and controlled a second minibus owned by a separate charity (Zeals Youth Trust). The charity used the minibuses to provide youth transport which enabled young people to undertake community activities at weekends and out of school hours. This work generated credits for the young people which could be used to access leisure activities with transport also provided by S4S.
37. S4S had a relationship with the local LINK Group but they noted that LINK currently had no capacity for providing out of school hours transport support. It

was also noted that S4S itself had no capacity to provide additional youth transport out of school hours.

Conclusions

Community First

38. Regarding the LINK schemes supported by Community First the TG felt that as these were targeted towards the most vulnerable in society, including providing health-related journeys (such as transport to hospital) there was no scope for expanding this to cover general youth transport. This view was especially supported after considering the safeguarding issues that would come with this expansion, such as DBS checks for volunteer drivers and workers. It was noted that there was already pressure in recruiting and retaining volunteers for the scheme, along with an increase in the journeys completed.

Seeds 4 Success (S4S)

39. The TG noted that S4S was an interesting example of a local community's response to providing worthwhile youth activities including the necessary transport support. This transport, however, was fully committed to specific youth activities and offered no capacity at the time to meet the needs identified by the TG. However, this remained a useful model which could be reconsidered should funding become available (*Recommendation 3*).

Public Bus Travel in Wiltshire

40. Given the low population density (and hence low profitability) of rural areas, it is a challenge for the market to supply practical and affordable transport solutions. Wiltshire being a large rural county with multiple bus operators, but no dominant operator, delivering services across the county made it more difficult to provide similar discounts as some of the bus passes on offer for young people in other areas.
41. It was noted that publicity of the Wiltshire Day Rover could be more proactive, both from the council and bus operators. The TG was informed that appointment to a post within the Passenger Transport Unit had been made, which had part of its duties on marketing on promotion. (*Recommendation 1*)
42. This also led the TG to consider information and publicity for all mode of travel available to young people (including safe walking and cycling route) and the current use of the council's Connecting Wiltshire ([website](#)) (*Recommendation 1*)
43. The TG also considered the issue of contactless payment which was a preferred option for many families but was not offered by all bus operators. However, the TG was informed at its last meeting (February 2020) that almost all bus operators in Wiltshire were now offering contactless payment. (*Recommendation 2*)

44. The TG explored the feasibility of “inter-acceptance” passes – where a single pass could be used with different bus and railway operators (akin to the Oyster card - electronic smartcards used to pay for public transport in London).
45. It was explained that bus ticket inter-acceptance was available in some partnership options available under Bus Services Act 2017, but it was unlikely that Wiltshire would meet the wider requirements of a formal partnership. It was understood however that the Department for Transport was disappointed by the take-up of the Partnership provisions available under the Act and were considering varying the requirements to make schemes possible in more areas. Any changes would be likely to be reported to the Environment Select Committee. (*Recommendations 4 and 7*)

Wiltshire Council Offer

46. Regarding the post-16 education transport offer from Wiltshire Council the TG considered that the low number of those signing up to the service could signify that there could be a better use for the £150,000 used to support the service in the form of a better offer that could be provided. (*Recommendation 3*)
47. Following discussions on funding bids during the TG meeting on 14 February 2020, officers agreed to include a “young person test” to their consideration of “enhancement to bus services”. This would enable officers to see how many of their proposed schemes for “enhancement to bus services” would benefit young people in Wiltshire. (*Recommendations 4 and 7*)
48. The outcome of the funding bids would be known after this TG had completed its work and the TG believed that the outcomes should be reported to overview and scrutiny when available. (*Recommendations 4 and 7*)
49. The TG explored the feasibility of a “digital travel card” which would be issued by the council and on which parents and carers could “top up” the credit. It was explained that this would enable some bus companies to read the card digitally, replacing the current system where the driver read the card and pressed a button on the ticket machine, but would not offer more benefits.
50. The reason was that, for school transport passes, most students travel on “closed door” coaches on which all seats are block booked by the council. Where the council uses local service buses, the council effectively purchased season tickets from the bus company valid for 380 single journeys, on a school day and during school times. The council did not purchase travel to the value of 380 single fares, so the card couldn’t be configured to operate on a monetary value credit scheme.
51. However, bearing in mind the council’s digitalisation aspirations, this did raise consideration of a single “Wiltshire Youth Card” which could be a “membership / access card” for transport, library, leisure centre, etc. as well as proof of age. This raised issues for considerations around the cost of the card (and which service would cover it), date for renewal (as it may have to be linked to the

holder's birthday rather than start of the school year), availability of compatible "readers" in all the centres, libraries and buses, etc. (*Recommendation 5*)

52. In terms of expected technological advancements, the TG was informed that the Bus Open Data Scheme, which had been soft launched on 1 January 2020, should enable users to access digital tracking (i.e. know where the bus is in real time). It was the Department for Transport's hope that phone apps would be developed to enable easy access to the information that would be made available through the scheme.
53. Although the TG did not reach a position to make recommendations around technological developments, it wished to acknowledge the willingness and positivity of the council's IT department in considering potential technological developments to enhance and facilitate young people's access to public transport.

Gaps and unmet needs in Youth Transport Provision

54. Unfortunately, the TG concluded that the unmet needs for free school bus pass holders identified during the course of its work were unlikely to be addressed at this point in time due to the extensive costs anticipated and complex practicalities (mainly due to the number of bus operators covering the county) involved in extending the free school bus offer to enable pass holders to attend either before and / or after school provision.
55. Nonetheless, the TG still believed that this left potentially vulnerable school pupils unable to access additional support through school and therefore should not be forgotten when the Wiltshire Local Transport Plan 2011-2026 was reviewed or updated. The TG believed that the potential central government funding and the potential app development based on the Open Data Scheme could represent significant changes to the options on offer, and may require an update to the Wiltshire Local Transport Plan 2011-2026 (*Recommendation 3*)
56. The TG believed that these unmet gaps could potentially be filled if "demand responsive public transport" was to become a reality across the county (and country).
57. "*Demand-responsive transport is a user-oriented form of passenger transport characterised by flexible routes and smaller vehicles operating in shared-ride mode between pick-up and drop-off locations according to passenger needs*" – Community Transport Association (UK).
58. An example of Demand Responsive Transport in Wiltshire was the Wigglybus service. However, the TG noted that this service had been reduced over the years, as Government funding for experimental services was withdrawn.
59. The TG was informed that demand-responsive transport seemed to be seen by central government as the way transport would evolve in future but that this was an expensive system to run. (*Recommendations 4 and 7*)

Proposal

60. To thank Master Alfie Lowe for his time, work on and valuable contributions to the task group as their Youth Representative. To also thank Devizes School for enabling Master Alfie Lowe's attendance and providing a room for the task group meetings.
61. To thank officers from the Passenger Transport Unit for their engagement with the TG.
62. To share this report and the Executive Response to it with the Wiltshire Youth Union.
63. To endorse the report of the task group and refer it to the Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Waste, the Cabinet Member for IT, Digitalisation and Operational Assets and the Cabinet Member for Children, Education & Skills for response at the Committee's next meeting.

Recommendations

That the Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Waste:

- 1. Ensures that some capacity is retained in the Passenger Transport Unit to deliver effective advertising and promoting of the services on offer and travel options available to young people in Wiltshire, including Connecting Wiltshire. *This would ensure that young people are better aware of the options available to them for traveling in and around the county.***
- 2. Ensures that all bus services contracted by the council have contactless pay facilities by April 2021. *This would ensure that young people using contactless (which seems to be a preferred choice for parents and carers) can use buses across the county.***
- 3. Considers, as part of the Wiltshire Local Transport Plan update, developing a "Bus Strategy" outlining the blue print for future bus provision across the county, which could include:**
 - a. specific reference to provision for young people (linking to the unmet needs identified);**
 - b. a consultation of all key stakeholders;**
 - c. any developments linked to the Open Data Scheme.**

This could also offer an opportunity to:

- a. review post-16 education transport to ensure it benefits as many young people as possible;**
- b. explore developing (or supporting the development of) schemes like Seed 4 Success, should funding be available.**

This would ensure that the Wiltshire Local Transport Plan and “Bus Strategy” reflects that consideration is given to the needs of young people.

4. Ensures that the following information is provided to the Environment Select Committee in a timely fashion:
 - a. Developments to the partnership options available under the Bus Services Act 2017;
 - b. The outcome of the “young person test” on the bids submitted for central government funding;
 - c. The outcome of the bids submitted for central government funding;
 - d. Update on demand-responsive transport initiatives nationally and potential application in Wiltshire.

That the Cabinet Member for IT, Digitalisation and Operational Assets:

5. Considers exploring the development of a single “Wiltshire Youth Card” (as described in paragraph 51). *This could simplify access to services for young people.*

That the Cabinet Member for Children, Education & Skills:

6. Notes this report and recommendations within it.

That the Environment Select Committee Chair and Vice-Chair:

7. Liaise with the Children’s Select Committee Chair and Vice-Chair when the information listed in recommendation 4 above is provided.

Cllr Tony Jackson, Chairman of the Youth Transport Task Group

Report author: Adam Brown, Senior Scrutiny Officer, 01225 718038,

adam.brown@wiltshire.gov.uk

Marie Gondlach, Senior Scrutiny Officer, 01225 713 597,

marie.gondlach@wiltshire.gov.uk

Appendices

None

Background documents

None

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Wiltshire Council

Children's Select Committee

10 March 2020

Final Report of the Traded Services for Schools and Outdoor Education Task Group – Outdoor Education

Purpose of the report

1. To present the findings and recommendations of the task group (TG) on Outdoor education for endorsement by the committee and referral to the Cabinet Member for response.

Background

2. At the 13 June 2017 meeting of the Children's Select Committee, Cllr Laura Mayes, (then) Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Skills asked if the Committee would consider looking into Traded Services for Schools.
3. Two Rapid Scrutiny exercises were undertaken on 13 September and 18 October 2017. The findings from these two meetings were respectively reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Select Committee on 26 September 2017 (access report [here](#)) and Children's Select Committee on 31 October 2017 ([link to report and minutes](#)).
4. The outcome of the rapid scrutiny exercises was the recommendation to establish a Traded Services for Schools task group, which would perform a separate piece of scrutiny on Outdoor Education. The TG started its work in February 2018.

Terms of reference

5. The following terms of reference were approved by Children's Select Committee on 17 April 2018:
 - (1) To review the proposed developments for traded services to schools, considering the outcomes of the service review of traded services (commenced in October 2016), with a particular focus on the following areas:
 - a) The model for the centralised trading unit and the proposed traded services team structure and appointments to ensure sustainability and quality of service;
 - b) The cost of services that are currently provided against projected costs to ensure value for money;
 - c) The plans for marketing to ensure continuous take-up;
 - d) The current policy;
 - e) How traded services will be future-proofed.

(2) To review and comment on the Cabinet report regarding the proposals for the future of outdoor education in Wiltshire, with particular focus on the evidence-based analysis that led to the options presented within the report. Comments from the TG will be presented to Cabinet at the same meeting at which the report is considered (currently scheduled for 27 March 2018).

6. Subsequently the following additional term of reference was approved by Children's Services Committee on 4 September 2018:

- (3) To review and comment on:
- a) the Council's advertising of the two outdoor education sites (Braeside and Oxenwood);
 - b) the Council's consideration of expressions of interest, including evaluation criteria and weighting;
 - c) the report to Cabinet presenting the findings on the expressions of interests (bids).

Membership

7. The membership of the two Rapid Scrutiny exercises transferred to the task group, except for Cllr Anna Cuthbert who had to resign from the TG due to conflicting work commitments:
- Mr John Hawkins, Chairman of the TG
 - Cllr Trevor Carbin
 - Cllr Jon Hubbard
 - Cllr Tony Jackson

Methodology

8. The TG held 14 meetings.
9. The task group's preliminary findings and recommendations were shared with the executive and officers of the council.

Timeline

10. The TG met on 7 February 2018 to consider the draft report of the findings of the traded services' review of Outdoor Education, to be presented to Cabinet on 27 March 2018. The TG made a number of recommendations to Cabinet; primarily for Cabinet to defer a decision on the closure of the centres until further information could be obtained ([link to report](#)).
11. The Cabinet at its meeting on the 27 March 2018 considered a review of outdoor education facilities. Outdoor education is a non-statutory function of the Council and to avoid significant medium to long term costs Cabinet at that meeting decided that both the Braeside and Oxenwood Outdoor Education Centres would close on the 31 August 2018.

12. The decision made by Cabinet on 27 March 2018 relating to Outdoor Education was subject to a Call-in, which was considered at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee held on 10 April 2018 ([link to reports and minutes](#)).
13. On 10 April 2018, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee resolved that *“On balance of the written and oral evidence presented, to find that there were insufficient grounds to demonstrate that the principles of decision making had not been followed by the Cabinet in this case, and therefore the decision can be implemented with immediate effect.”*
14. Following the decision made by Cabinet on 27 March 2018, the Council received representations from the public and community groups and contact by organisations expressing an interest in continuing the operation of the centres as an outdoor education facility. The publicity generated by the call-in process and petition regarding the closure of the centres generated sufficient interest from outside bodies for the council to conduct a soft market testing exercise to explore the interest further.
15. Full Council received a petition on 22 May 2018, which had received over 16,000 signatures, and which requested that the outdoor education centres in Braeside and Oxenwood not be closed. Council made three recommendations, including *“that social impacts should be considered equally with financial impacts, and that the Cabinet use every best effort to ensure the two sites will remain in use for outdoor education”* ([link to petition and minutes](#)).
16. Cabinet at its 12 June 2018 meeting resolved to keep the centres open until Christmas 2018 and to commence a formal bidding process. The aim was to market the sites as going concerns to explore any viable alternatives to complete closure of the services ([link to report and minutes](#)).
17. Cabinet on 11 December 2018 considered the outdoor education bids, including a report from the task group, which was also considered by Children’s Select Committee on 8 January 2019 ([link to report and minutes](#)).

Evidence Gathering

18. The TG met on 7 February 2018 to consider the draft report of the findings of the traded services’ review of Outdoor Education, to be presented to Cabinet on 27 March 2018.
19. The TG resolved to undertake site visits of the two council-owned outdoor education centres, and consequently visited Braeside and Oxenwood (thereafter named “the centres”) on 27 February 2018.
20. The TG is grateful to the following witnesses who contributed to its review of Outdoor Education:

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Keith Browning | (formerly) Centre Manager, Braeside Education & Conference Centre |
|----------------|---|

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Nick Cave | (formerly) Interim Traded Services Director |
| David Clarke | (formerly) Head of School Effectiveness Commissioning, Performance and School Effectiveness |
| Tom Davies | (formerly) Deputy Centre Manager, Oxenwood |
| Cllr Laura Mayes | (formerly) Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Skills |
| Yousaf Mirza | (formerly) Head of Education, Braeside Education & Conference Centre |
| Mal Munday | (formerly) Head of Service, Support and Safeguarding, Early Help |
| Ed Plank | (formerly) Centre Manager, Oxenwood |
| Alan Stubbersfield | (formerly) Interim Director Education & Skills AM, Education and Skills |
| Cllr Philip Whalley | (formerly) Portfolio Holder for Education and Skills |
| Cllr Philip Whitehead | (formerly) Cabinet Member for Finance, Procurement, Transformation and Operational Assets |
| Elizabeth Williams | (formerly) Head of Finance Care, Finance & Procurement |

21. The TG met on 17 October 2018 to consider the bids that had been received to date by the Council with regards to the potential sale of Braeside and Oxenwood.
22. The TG resolved to undertake a visit of the Lackham site (Wiltshire College and University Centre), in the same way it had undertaken site visits of Braeside and Oxenwood, to better understand how outdoor education would be provided on site.
23. The TG is grateful to the following witnesses who contributed to its Lackham site visit on 9 November 2018:

| | |
|---------------|--|
| Adrian Ford | Deputy Principal, Corporate Resources |
| Tony Basham | Director of Business and Partnership |
| Julie Haslett | Campus facilities co-ordinator for Lackham |

24. The TG also met on 7 November 2018 to consider the draft Cabinet report on preferred bidders for the centres ahead of its consideration by Cabinet on 11 December 2018.
25. Throughout 2019 and early 2020, the TG carried on receiving updates on the transfers until these were completed for Oxenwood (1 October 2019) and Braeside (1 February 2020), including the decision by Wiltshire College not to pursue its bid for Braeside and the council's subsequent selection of Classes Abroad as its preferred bidder for Braeside.

Conclusions

26. The task group's conclusions and key findings on Outdoor Education can be found in the task group's reports presented to Cabinet as follows, and are therefore not repeated in this report:
 - a) Cabinet on 27 March 2018 – closure of centres - [link to report](#);

- b) Cabinet on 11 December 2018 (also considered by Children's Select Committee on 8 January 2019) - preferred bidders - [link to report and minutes](#).
27. The TG would like to express its gratitude at the opportunity it was given to be informed of the bids ahead of a decision being made by Cabinet on preferred bidders (TG meeting on 7 November 2018), as well as all other efforts made by the Executive to inform the TG of all the work undertaken, issues faced and milestones reached to complete the transfers.
 28. As reflected in the task group's report presented to Cabinet on 27 March 2018, the TG had always believed that the opportunities offered to children and young people in Wiltshire through the two centres should not be lost, although it accepted that this may no longer be offered directly by the council.
 29. The TG is therefore delighted at the outcome reached with regards to the provision of outdoor education in Wiltshire and would like to recognise the quality and thoroughness of the work and dedication of the Cabinet Members and officers involved, in particular Paul Redford, Head of Traded Services.
 30. The TG would urge councillors to ensure that schools and community groups in their areas are aware of the services on offer at the centres from the new providers, Classes Abroad ([Braeside website](#)) and Community First ([Oxenwood website](#)). (*Recommendation 1*)

Proposal

31. To thank the (former) Cabinet Member for Finance, Procurement, Transformation and Operational Assets for his engagement with the task group.
32. To congratulate and thank the (former) Cabinet Member for Finance, Procurement, Transformation and Operational Assets and all officers involved for completing the transfers for Braeside and Oxenwood.
33. To recognise and pay tribute to the professionalism, dedication and enthusiasm of the staff at Braeside and Oxenwood who carried on delivering a service through a period of uncertainty.
34. To note and endorse the task group's reports presented to Cabinet on 27 March 2018 and 11 December 2018 and the key findings and recommendations within the reports.
35. To endorse the report of the TG and refer it to the Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Skills for response at the Committee's next meeting.

Recommendations

The task group recommends that the Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Skills;

- (1) Ensures that all councillors are aware of the offer at Braeside and Oxenwood (councillors briefing note, elected wire – scrutiny story of the week, etc.) (paragraph 30) *to raise awareness of the centres having remained operational.*
-

Mr John Hawkins, Chairman of the Traded Services for Schools and Outdoor Education Task Group

Report author: Marie Gondlach, Senior Scrutiny Officer, 01225 713 597,
marie.gondlach@wiltshire.gov.uk

Appendices

None

Background documents

None

Wiltshire Council

Children's Select Committee

10 March 2020

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- Mr John Hawkins, Chairman of the TG
 - Cllr Trevor Carbin
 - Cllr Jon Hubbard
 - Cllr Tony Jackson

Methodology

8. The TG held 14 meetings.
9. The TG's preliminary findings and recommendations were shared with the executive and officers of the council.

Evidence Gathering

10. The TG considered the evidence and information provided for the two Rapid Scrutiny exercises, as well as the reports presenting the findings for the two meetings. The TG would also like to thank the following witnesses who contributed to these exercises:

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Grant Davis | Strategic Financial Support Manager. |
| Michael Hudson | (formerly) Associate Director for Finance |

11. The TG is grateful to the following witnesses who contributed to its work on Traded Services for Schools

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Nick Cave | (formerly) Interim Traded Services Director |
| Cllr Jane Davies | Portfolio Holder for Education and SEND |

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Kevin Ford | Managing Director, Integra (trading arm of South Gloucestershire Council) |
| Terence Herbert | (formerly) Director for Children's Services |
| Cllr Simon Jacobs | Cabinet Member for Finance and Procurement |
| Cllr Laura Mayes | (formerly) Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Skills |
| Richard Morgan | People and Communities, Service Manager – Education & Business Support. Bath & North East Somerset Council |
| Sue Morgan | Schools Support Manager, Integra (trading arm of South Gloucestershire Council) |
| Paul Redford | Head of Traded Services, Education and Skills |
| Ruth Starr | Business Development Officer, Education and Skills |
| Tina Ward | Manager for Wiltshire Learning Resources, Education and Skills |
| Simon Watkins | School Improvement and Excellence Lead, School Effectiveness |
| Cllr Philip Whalley | (formerly) Portfolio Holder for Education and Skills |
| Cllr Philip Whitehead | (formerly) Cabinet Member for Finance, Procurement, Transformation and Operational Assets |

12. The TG met on 22 February 2018 to review the proposed developments for Traded Services for Schools as designed following the service review.
13. The TG was informed that historically traded services for schools had been fragmented and spread across the council. There had now been a programme of work to bring all these different services and teams together with an overall commercial plan (each service would also have its own commercial plan – feeding into the overall commercial plan).
14. The TG was also informed of the implementation of Right Choice, an IT system delivering an accessible website and platform for customers, as well as reporting opportunities for the council (services purchased, etc., as well as whether information circulated had been accessed).
15. The TG would like to recognise, in particular, the dedication and commitment shown by Ruth Starr to the development of Right Choice. It was fully appreciated that she had been instrumental in its timely delivery.
16. Work was on-going in identifying true costs for services being traded and reviewing the services the council wished to provide (outside of statutory duties).
17. The TG met on 20 June 2018 to further understand the functionality of Right Choice, as well as the outcome of Phase 1 of the review of traded services and the subsequent project plan, commercial plan, marketing strategy, traded services policy. The TG also considered the size of the traded service for schools team at the time and its ability to deliver its project plan.

18. The next meeting of the TG focusing on traded services for schools was on 26 September 2018, where the TG received an update on the implementation and continuous development of Right Choice (training could now be booked).
19. At that meeting the TG was informed of proposals to amend the role of Commercial Manager, following three unsuccessful attempts to recruit to the post. It was planned for the “new” role to be offered internally as a secondment opportunity, reporting to the Director of Education and Skills.
20. The core team for traded services would include some “mixed-funded” post (funded by service area, funded by Children’s Services, some funded in part by multiple services):
 - a) the Commercial Manager, with responsibilities as commercial business coordinator, training coordinator and marketing and business account management [*which was now the role of Head of Traded Services, Education and Skills*];
 - b) account managers with responsibilities for multiple accounts [*which was subsequently not created as a specific role, the expectation was that each traded service would undertake that role and communicate with other traded services to meet client’s needs and wants*]; and
 - c) business development officer, who were responsible for engaging with customers, ensuring that the Right Choice website delivered an effective platform for all users and supporting the Head of Traded Services to deliver corporate priorities for income growth year on year.
21. The TG was concerned about the account managers’ ability to fully support customers if they were responsible for multiple accounts. Reassurance was offered that the CRM (Customer Relationship Management) system should facilitate part of the work to be undertaken by Accounts Manager to enable them to appropriately cover their workload [*as per 20b – there would not be account managers. The work of relationship management would be delivered by the Head of Traded Services and the Business Development Officers*].
22. At its meeting on 8 March 2019 the TG received update on the work undertaken on Right Choice, on a charging policy, and business case for traded services levy, as well as the work on developing a project plan, a marketing strategy and commercial plan.
23. Having been informed that there were many different approaches taken to traded services by local authorities, some only delivering statutory requirements, the TG agreed to engage with other local authorities to gather information on best practice as well as understanding the reasons for the particular traded services arrangements that authority had made. The TG agreed to approach other local authorities once it had received fuller financial information from the council.
24. At that meeting (8 March 2019) the TG was unable to effectively review the draft charging policy until it had received information on the council’s aims and objectives with regards to traded services and the true costs, including overheads, of each traded service.

25. The TG was also informed that a £150,000 budget had been allocated to support a traded services team, which would enable some focus on marketing, looking after customers and other initiatives to generate income.
26. The TG was pleased to note that efforts were being made to attract customers other than schools (such as early years settings and small to medium businesses).
27. At its 11 July 2019 meeting the TG focused on financial considerations and reviewed the 5-year business plan and traded account forecast that had been produced for the Learning Resources Hub, which was proposed as a template for other traded services to develop individual business plans over the next 5 years.
28. The business plans would be used as working documents to support traded services in developing their business; the business plans would reflect and typify the “culture move” for the council towards a “business / commercially minded” approach for traded services.
29. The TG questioned the length and detail of the business plan for the Learning Resources Hub and how achievable this would be for other traded services developing their business plans. It was explained that the business plan for the Learning Resources Hub had two purposes, including being presented to Cabinet to decide about investing in both the service and the building it was housed in. It was not expected for other business plans to be as detailed.
30. At its meeting on 11 November 2019, the TG received an overall update presentation on traded services with an emphasis on the council’s aims and objectives for traded services for schools:
 - a) To deliver high quality services, competitively priced, tailored and developed with the customers in mind;
 - b) The Council’s role is to ensure cost recovery for services is consistent with the level of individual and community benefit that the services provide, taking into consideration the customers’ expectations and annual funding budgets;
 - c) It is the responsibility of Heads of Service /Managers to ensure that their budgetary responsibilities are met and appropriate fees are charged in line with: market knowledge, competitor analysis, statutory principles; compliance with Council policies affecting the service and its delivery within Educational sites.
31. The TG was informed that it was accepted by the council that some areas of traded services for schools would remain subsidised, but that it was also expected that some areas would achieve a profit. The ambition was for traded service for schools overall to break even in future years.

32. The value of achieving “soft gains” was also recognised (i.e. providing support and services which helped schools avoid higher costs such as the costs that could be incurred should some statutory duties not be met).
33. The TG noted the progress on the implementation of the work programme, including the development of business plans.
34. The TG was informed that progress had not been as quick as hoped in responding to the recommendations made in the audit report by SWAP Internal Audit Services. SWAP had been informed and the TG was assured that the auditors had not raised excessive concern as the work was on-going.
35. The main remaining issue to address was the governance of traded services for school, once the TG had concluded its work.
36. The TG was also informed that currently financial reporting had to be done manually to reconcile information from both Right Choice and SAP (council accountancy system) to report on:
 - a) Overall traded services budget;
 - b) Income from schools and which services schools were buying;
 - c) Individual traded services’ incomes.
37. It was hoped the “automation” of compiling and comparing the financial information from the two systems could be a project undertaken as part of the digitalisation programme. This was supported by the TG to free up officers’ time and to ensure accuracy.
38. The TG recognised and appreciated the efforts made by officers to engage directly with schools, including roadshows and visits.

The TG questioned how the information gathered (such as services already purchased or not purchased, upcoming investments considered, etc.) was collected and shared.

The TG wanted to ensure that any and all officers, either within the team or involved with, Traded Services for Schools could access that information. That information could then be used to enhance customer service, for example by pre-empting needs and targeting advertising, contacting customers at the right time (i.e. when existing contracts are due for renewal), etc.
39. On 12 February 2020, the TG met with representatives from Integra, the trading arm of South Gloucestershire Council.
40. Integra had been established in 2011 as a single Traded Services team and delivered facilities management and specialist support solutions to schools, educational establishments and businesses. The TG explored how and why Integra was established and the services currently on offer.
41. This offered the TG reassurance that establishing an arm-length traded services team could be a successful model.

42. The Chairman of the task group was able to have a telephone conversation with the officer who had supported the Bath & North East Somerset Council's working group on traded services. The Chairman explored the decision-making process that had led the council to vastly reduce its provision of traded services for schools. The Chairman also explored schools' ability to meet their statutory duties when purchasing services from private sector providers.
43. Whilst this was a working model, this confirmed for the TG that the option chosen by Wiltshire Council offered more options to maintain some of the "soft gain" services (*paragraph 32 refers*).
44. Unfortunately, the TG could not get information from Herts for learning (Hertfordshire County Council) and Hampshire Services (Hampshire County Council) to better understand their traded services models.

Conclusions

45. As its work progressed the TG agreed (*20 June 2018*) that developing a separate Traded Services Policy was no longer relevant - as long as robust commercial, marketing and project plans were developed.
46. The following recommendations were made by the TG during the course of its work and implemented by the Traded Services team (*Recommendation 1*):
 - a) The option for headteachers to allocate responsibility to a member of staff on Right Choice to be fed back to the user group.
A September to December 2019 survey created the opportunity for a significant amount of feedback to be shared and was used to shape the Traded Services Priorities for 2020;
 - b) That firm, consistent and measured communications were established with the school community, presenting both the advantages of trading with the council as well as the risks to some of the less commercially viable services.
A programme of 'Show and Tell' Roadshows dedicated to supporting Schools on Right Choice was being delivered county-wide in addition to the 6-weekly Headteacher Breakfast Briefings with the Director of Education - intended to give schools a forum to ask questions and find solutions whilst being kept updated on developments;
 - c) To reasonably invest in developing a marketing and promotion strategy.
A newly created Digital and Social Media Officer role, currently fulfilled with an experienced consultancy that has experience of the services within Wiltshire Council and brings the business-approach to selling services needed.
 - d) To reasonably invest in appropriate technical support
Now provided by the two Business Development Officers to ensure customers are well-informed of all Traded Services available and how to access them;
 - e) That business plans for traded services be shorter and less detailed than the one produced for the Learning Resources Hub, but should contain (at a minimum):
 - i. Ambitions and objectives;

- ii. Marketing and process in delivering these ambitions and objectives;
 - iii. Financial – trading accounts (with a 5-year forecast).
47. The following were discussed and remained on-going work:
- a) The development of a more sophisticated pricing approach (including discounts / packages / bundles offers) (*Recommendation 2*);
 - b) To deliver the traded services project plan (*Recommendation 2*);
 - c) To develop the traded services’ offer “beyond” schools and outside of the county (*Recommendation 2*);
 - d) To develop a process to record and share information from customers to enable pre-empting of needs and tailoring of approach (*Recommendation 2*);
 - e) To develop a Governance process for traded services for schools, including overview and scrutiny (*Recommendation 3*);
 - f) To implement the recommendations from the SWAP audit report (*Recommendation 3*);
 - g) To develop key performance indicators for traded services for schools (*Recommendation 3*);
 - h) To receive (and monitor) feedback from service users on Right Choice usability and the quality of the services themselves (*Recommendation 3*);
 - i) To develop business plans for all traded services for schools (*Recommendation 3*);
 - j) The automation of financial reporting (between SAP and Right Choice) (*Recommendation 2*) and developing a financial report as part of the governance arrangements (*Recommendation 3*);
48. The TG appreciated the complexity of setting up Traded Services for School and the importance of setting it up correctly to ensure income for the council. This would enable the council either to retain appreciated services which may not achieve a profit on their own or to offer discounts / packages / bundles to customers.
49. As Traded Services for Schools remained a “new service” at the time the TG concluded its work, an update to the Children’s Select Committee on the development of some of the areas of work detailed above would be welcome (*Recommendation 4*).
50. The TG recognised that embedding Traded Services for Schools required a significant cultural change towards a commercial approach. This cultural change would likely remain a challenge for some time but could also present opportunities for service areas to make changes and improvements, for example opportunities for continuous professional development, revised team structure, etc. (*Recommendation 5*).
51. The Traded Services for Schools team gained expertise in supporting services to develop a commercial approach and the TG would recommend that this expertise is recognised and utilised (*Recommendation 6*).

52. Based on the information it received, the TG also identified that a higher degree of flexibility and creativity, including temporary appointments, may be required with regards to recruitment. This would ensure that traded services can be developed to meet a customer's demand or need quickly enough to remain competitive with (or ahead of) other providers. This reactivity would not always be possible within the existing recruitment processes for the council (*Recommendation 7*).
53. The TG also recognised the work undertaken to develop Right Choice and subsequent work to support customers in using the system. The TG would recommend that all councillors be made aware of both Right Choice and Traded Services for School, so that councillors can offer advice or signpost schools, and any other groups, in their area who could benefit from accessing services through Right Choice (*Recommendation 8*).

Proposal

54. To thank the (former) Cabinet Member for Finance, Procurement, Transformation and Operational Assets for his engagement with the TG.
55. To note and endorse the recommendations made by the TG and already implemented (*paragraph 46*)
56. To endorse the report of the TG and refer it to the Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Skills for response at the Committee's next meeting.

Recommendations

The TG recommends that the Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Skills;

- (1) Notes the recommendations made by the TG and already implemented (*paragraph 46*).**
- (2) Ensures that the Traded Services for School's team is resourced in such a way to enable it to:**
 - a. develop a more sophisticated pricing approach, including discounts / packages / bundles offers *to maximise customer retention*;**
 - b. deliver the traded services for schools' project plan *to ensure Traded Services for School can become commercially viable*;**
 - c. develop the traded services' offer "beyond" schools and outside of the county, including "back office support" for charities and community groups (such as building management, DBS checks, etc.), *to maximise potential customer base*;**
 - d. develop a process to record and share information from customers to enable pre-empting of needs and tailoring of approach *to enhance customers' experience (and satisfaction)*;**

- e. develop with the relevant service(s) the automation of financial reporting (between SAP and Right Choice) *to maximise accuracy and release officer's time.*
- (3) Considers the establishment of a project / governance board made up of relevant director(s), head(s) of service, executive member(s) and representative(s) from overview and scrutiny to support the development and embedding of Traded Services for Schools by providing encouragement and oversight, with an initial focus on the following areas:
- a. Implementation of the recommendations from the SWAP audit report *to ensure robustness of Traded Services for School;*
 - b. Development of key performance indicators for traded services for schools, including Right Choice (usability of the system and quality of the services themselves) *to enable monitoring of performance;*
 - c. Development of a business plan by each service area *to support the embedding of a commercial approach;*
 - d. Financial reporting *to enable monitoring of performance.*
- (4) Provide an update to the Children's Select Committee within a year on recommendations 3 and 4 as well as any other development for Traded Services for School.
- (5) Ensures the council takes available opportunities to work with service areas to help them develop in a way that enables them to deliver more efficiently as traded services (i.e. better meet customers' demand) as well as present opportunities for staff (i.e. continuous professional development, revised team structure, etc.) *to support commercialism opportunities.*
- (6) Ensures that Cabinet identifies a member to have responsibility for commercialism. This member should be made fully aware of the expertise developed by the Traded Services for School team and how this could be used by other service areas developing a commercialism approach.
- (7) Considers developing with Human Resources a recruitment process specific to Traded Services with Schools *to ensure that traded services for schools can be developed to flexibly meet customers' demand.*
- (8) Raises councillors' awareness of both Right Choice and Traded Services for Schools through communication *to enable councillors to advise or signpost schools and other groups.*
-

Mr John Hawkins, Chairman of the Traded Services for Schools and Outdoor Education TG

Report author: Marie Gondlach, Senior Scrutiny Officer, 01225 713 597,
marie.gondlach@wiltshire.gov.uk

Appendices

None

Background documents

None

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Wiltshire Council

Children's Select Committee

10 March 2020

Fostering Excellence - the development of Wiltshire Council's Fostering Service

Purpose of report

1. This report indicates progress to date of the Fostering Excellence development project within Wiltshire Council, and indicating next steps.
2. The issues to be addressed through the project are:
 - Increase initial enquiries and therefore assessments and approvals of Wiltshire Council foster carers;
 - Improve the retention of Wiltshire approved foster carers;
 - Increase the number of children cared for by our foster carers (currently 46%);
 - Maintain high occupancy rates of Wiltshire approved foster carers (currently 80%+).

Background

3. It is priority for Wiltshire Council to ensure that 60-70% of our children in care are living with Wiltshire approved foster carers, reducing the number who live with Independent Fostering Agency foster carers and making sure that children and young people can remain at their schools, colleges and living in their home communities where it is right and safe for them to do so.
4. To do this, we need to recruit a net gain of about 60 fostering households over the next three years, representing an overall increase to approximately 200 households.
5. Wiltshire Council Fostering Service must not only be competitive with neighbouring local authorities but also with the Independent Fostering Agencies that operate within the area.
6. We need to be the "agency of choice" for people who are thinking of becoming foster carers and to do this we need an excellent response service to first enquiries arising from innovative recruitment, timely assessments and then competitive financial support for carers supported by a comprehensive training and support package.
7. We know that by providing high quality, local and stable provision we will be able to help children and young people remain settled and they will achieve good outcomes.
8. By providing these places for children in care, there will be lower numbers of external places used and a resulting reduction in spend from the Placement Budget which is used to support external fostering and residential places for children and young people.

9. It is recognised that the recruitment and retention of foster carers is a national challenge and the Fostering Excellence project is Wiltshire Council's response to this.
10. National evidence shows us that there is steady decrease in the number of foster carers overall with a small rise in Independent Fostering Agency numbers. Whilst initial enquiries increased in 2018, this was not followed by an equivalent increase in applications and, therefore, approvals.
11. We are understanding more about the impact of early childhood experiences and trauma on children and young people and so the task of foster carers in looking after our children is increasingly complex with some children requiring a specific therapeutic approach. Most typically, these children are likely to be cared for by Independent Fostering Agency carers or in residential settings and we want to make sure that Wiltshire Council foster carers can care for these children. For this reason, Fostering Excellence provides a tiered approach to the fostering task.
12. Previous recruitment campaigns, supported by a move to a Skills based payment arrangement for foster carers, has not led to the significant growth required.
13. Fostering Excellence is a more significant change centred around increased payments for carers, the development of a cohort of specifically trained "therapeutic" foster carers working alongside other carers and all of whom are supported by a comprehensive training and support offer. We will make sure all our foster carers and the staff supporting them are resilient and "trauma informed"; this will provide safety and stabilization for children, allow them to process grief and trauma and reconnect with the world, and the adults, around them.
14. Fostering Excellence is a three-year programme, beginning in 2020/21 and the recruitment targets are as follows:
 - Year 1 2020/21: 140 households + 25 – 15 (retire/leave) = 150 households
 - Year 2 2021/22: 150 + 38 – 18 = 170
 - Year 3 2022/23: 170 + 50 – 20 = 200
15. In reading this report, please note that some aspects of the new arrangements as proposed are yet to be finalised and will be further discussed with staff and foster carers; for example, the names of the tiers of fostering, the actual final payments rates, details of the wider generic support offer to foster carers. However, it is not anticipated that the final model will show significant departure from the framework as presented here.
16. The issue to be solved through Fostering Excellence is indicated above and in developing the strategy and plan for this, the following will be different:
 - Significant short-term investment is being sought to increase staffing capacity and, more importantly, to increase payments to carers
 - Improved recruitment and assessment activity
 - Improved tiered support offer to foster carers and staff, aligned with a therapeutic approach
 - Improved business and QA model with performance management
 - Simplified payment and approval arrangements

17. Fostering Excellence will impact upon all Wiltshire's children in care as our foster carers are provided with the skills and support to look after children under the terms of the project. We will approve foster carers within broader terms of approval which will allow greater flexibility and use the relationship between foster carers, their supervising social worker and the wider Fostering Service to ensure the best places are identified for children and young people.
18. The tiers of carers will be:
 - Connected Person foster carers and mainstream carers;
 - Intensive foster carers, receiving enhanced support and training;
 - Therapeutic foster carers, who will look after our most troubled children;
 - STEPS carers, providing emergency short term places for children.
19. Although the training and support will be differentiated in some ways for the groups of carers, all will be able to access an improved range of generic support opportunities developed with the support of the wider Council and some external partners. The overall aim is to make Wiltshire Council the preferred fostering agency in the area for those wishing to be foster carers.

Main considerations for the committee

20. It is too early in the life of the project to indicate actual progress and impact to date. This report is provided to Children's Select to bring an understanding of the Fostering Excellence project and the anticipated impact. This will allow Children's Select to track progress and exercise challenge.
21. To date, during the planning and early stages of implementation, the available budget has been used to:
 - Appoint a two-year fixed term Assistant Team Manager (with backfill) in the Fostering Team to provide additional capacity to support the project
 - Appoint support workers focussing on the recruitment of foster carers
 - Commit to an extensive programme of DDP training for foster carers and staff
 - Develop and agree a range of new recruitment material with an external provider ("Eleven"), with actual recruitment activity and online presence managed by Wiltshire Council Communications Team and others within the Council
22. The key decision awaited at the time of writing this report is the CLT agreement of the proposal for increase on fostering payments made to carers. This is required in order to provide the central component of Fostering Excellence and make Wiltshire Council Fostering Service competitive with others operating in the area.
23. As indicated, Fostering Excellence is designed to have significant impact over three years, from 2020/21. Looking at current (January 2020 figures) recruitment of foster carers:
 - 30 contacts from households
 - 13 formal enquiries

- 4 applications (all allocated to assessors and booked for May 2020 Foster Panel)
 - In addition, 1 application received in February 2020 – also allocated.
24. This is broadly in line with activity in the preceding year, month on month. In Q3 of 2019/20 (preceding Fostering Excellence):
- 3 fostering households were approved
 - 5 fostering households were deregistered
 - 88 contacts were received
 - 16 formal enquiries were received
 - 8 applications were received
25. Recruitment activity has continued throughout Quarter 4 to date with some approaches that are embedded within Fostering Excellence being used to support the work; for example, more immediate response times from support workers, consideration of broader approval terms. The anticipated impact of Fostering Excellence and the accompanying recruitment campaign will be to significantly increase performance over the next three years.
26. Broadly, the key milestones for the project are:
- November 2019: Families and Children’s Service SMT agree the project and outline development plan
 - December 2019: Listening and discussion events with foster carers. (Although formal feedback from carers was not recorded, both events indicated broad, positive agreement with the plans and anticipated outcomes of the project.)
 - January 2020: Sign off of new recruitment materials and campaign
 - February 2020: CLT sign-off of financial commitment
 - April 2020: Implementation of transition of foster carers to Fostering Excellence arrangements
 - April 2020: DDP training programme for foster carers and staff begins

Environmental impact of the proposal

27. Not applicable.

Equality and diversity impact of the proposal

28. The development of Fostering Excellence is designed to improve outcomes for Wiltshire Council’s children and young people in care. By improving the sufficiency of foster carers, bringing better choice and matching to the care of children it is anticipated that more of our children will be able to remain living in their communities, stay at their schools or colleges and continue to have quality contact with their families and friends.

Risk assessment

29. Risks that may arise if Fostering Excellence does not deliver improvement and therefore good outcomes for children:

- Safeguarding risk to children in care if they live with foster carers who are not able to keep them safe or who have not been prepared and supported adequately. Safeguarding is considered a high-level risk within the corporate risk register.
 - An inadequate supply of foster carers to meet the needs of Wiltshire children requiring emergency, short term and long term care or permanence through living with foster carers.
 - Reputational risk for the Council if the Agency is not effective and does not achieve good outcomes for children who need to live with foster carers.
 - Reputational risk if statutory timescales are not met regarding children in care.
 - Reputational risk if the Service is rated as Inadequate through inspection.
 - Financial risk if the proportion of our children in care living with Wiltshire Council approved foster carers does not increase.
30. Effective delivery of the Fostering Service function and the enhanced brought by the Fostering Excellence project will mitigate these risks.

Financial implications

31. When children and young people in care cannot be placed with Wiltshire Council approved foster carers, the likelihood is that they will live with foster carers from Independent Fostering Agencies or in residential care. Both of these are high cost options. By increasing the number of children living with in-house carers, the pressure on the Placement Budget used to pay for these external placements will be reduced. If Fostering Excellence does not produce the anticipated impact, the budget pressure is likely to remain as there is no predicted significant fall in the number of children in care.

Legal implications

32. None identified.

Conclusion

33. Fostering Excellence represents a significant undertaking and is a Council-wide initiative, reflecting the fact that increasing the number of our children living with Wiltshire Council approved foster carers is a Council-wide priority.
34. For many years, it has been recognised that it is hard to recruit foster carers and this project represents a commitment from the Council to try and do things differently whilst basing the initiative on what is seen to work in some other local authorities (we looked at what is in place in Outstanding graded authorities) and what we learn from our own experience and from research.
35. The aim is to have a high performing and effective Fostering Service with our carers at the heart of it. To have excellent recruitment and retention figures and to make

sure that we support a kinship-reunification approach as, fundamentally, children do better when they live with their families.

36. It is too early to present actual impact; this report sets out the aims and desired outcomes of the project.
37. It is the intention of the Fostering Service to use improved management information and performance management to develop a comprehensive dashboard of information that will be used across the Council as required to ensure positive progress and exercise required challenge where progress falters.

Author: Iona Payne, Head of Service, iona.payne@wiltshire.gov.uk

Background papers

The following unpublished documents have been relied on in the preparation of this report:

Fostering Excellence Plan: January 2020

Fostering Success: presentation to SMT, November 2019

Appendices

None