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| Meeting of:  | <b>Healthy Living and Social Care Scrutiny Committee</b>  |
| Date of Meeting:   | <b>Tuesday, 06 July 2021</b>  |
| Relevant Scrutiny Committee:   | Healthy Living and Social Care  |
| Report Title:  | Families First Report 2020-21   |
| Purpose of Report:   | To appraise Scrutiny Committee of progress and activity within the Welsh Government grant allocated to support the delivery of the Families First Plan 2020/21 in the Vale of Glamorgan and enable Scrutiny Committee to exercise their functions.        |
| Report Owner:  | Prevention and Partnership Manager  |
| Responsible Officer:   | Director of Social Services   |
| Elected Member and Officer Consultation:   | Cabinet Member, Social Care and Health.<br>Head of Children and Young People Services.<br>Head of ALN and Wellbeing<br>Operational Manager, Accountancy<br>Operational Manager, Legal Services<br>Operational Manager, Children and Young People Services |
| Policy Framework:  | This is a matter for Executive decision   |
| <p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The purpose of this report is to apprise Members of the Families First programme, some of the individual project outcomes and highlight the future direction of the programme.</li> </ul> |   |

## **Recommendations**

1. That the contents of the report be considered.
2. That the positive work undertaken to support children, young people and families in the Vale of Glamorgan be considered.

## **Reason for Recommendations**

1. Recommendations 1&2 – That Members are kept informed about positive progress made around the development of Families First and to enable Scrutiny Committee to exercise their functions.

## **1. Background**

- 1.1 The Families First Plan was initially developed in 2012 and focussed on a support network of provision and services aligned to a 'team around the family' approach.
- 1.2 Families First Programme Guidance was refreshed in 2017 and reaffirmed the requirement to maintain the 'team around the family' model; described as Families Achieving Change Together (FACT) in the Vale of Glamorgan and to maintain services within the criteria for a Disability Focus. It also highlighted a step change within its priorities for commissioned services moving away from a wide range of bespoke services to a clear focus on parent support services and support for young people.
- 1.3 In 2018 the Families First Management Board approved the creation of three new teams: the Vale Parenting Team, Wellbeing Youth Mentoring Team and the Families First Advice Line (FFAL). All went live from April 2018, with a formal launch in October 2018. The merger of previously existing projects brought together projects with similar aims and target groups and allowed the Management Board an opportunity to test new ways of working.
- 1.4 This report reflects activity of Families First seven distinct projects that exist under the Families First Plan during 2020-21:
  - FACT – delivered by Social Services;
  - Families First Advice Line (FFAL) delivered by Social Services;
  - Disability Focus – internally delivered and externally commissioned;
  - Parenting – internally delivered Social Services;
  - Youth Wellbeing – internally delivered by Education;
  - Young Carers – externally commissioned;
  - Central coordination – internally delivered by Education.
- 1.5 In April 2019 Welsh Government (WG) established the Children and Communities (CCG) Grant. This grant absorbed Families First and encompassed six other grants: Flying Start, Legacy Fund, Promoting Positive Engagement for Young

People, St. David's Day Fund, Communities for Work Plus and Childcare and Play. This new integrated funding stream has remained in place for the whole of the Assembly term and has been helpful for the sharing of resources between grants although all maintain their separate identities and guidance. The grant has remained subject to annual confirmation and at the discretion of ministerial approval. Guidance on any projected changes post 2021/22 will emerge as the newly formed Administration of Welsh Government establishes itself.

- 1.6** The current pandemic and the lockdown conditions experienced over the year have had wide ranging impacts on all vulnerable children, young people and families. This has also impacted upon our staff and their ability (and that of projects) to do their work effectively. Families First is a front facing service that builds on social interaction. Moving from face to face work to the use of social media and emerging technologies has taken time for both clients and project staff. Issues in accessing the correct technology and learning to use it in different ways has reflected in the way some users of our services have chosen to limit their engagement with the Families First Services. Similarly, there are examples where engagement has improved through virtual means.

## **2. Key Issues for Consideration**

### **Individual project progress during 2020-21:**

- 2.1** FACT is delivered via Social Services. Within the year 78 families completed a Joint Assessment Family Framework (JAFF) (69 families in 2018/19), with 42 post JAFF closure assessments. Referrals from Children's Services (where these have not met the threshold for statutory intervention or require a 'step down' service), have remained high, with many cases remaining open between 8-12 months due to complex needs. The pandemic and its associated restrictions have impacted on the ability of the team to operate and collect certain types of data, such as measuring 'children/young people improving their school attendance' or 'children improving their speech, language and communication skills'. This has been further hampered by reduced levels of evaluation returns. It is envisaged this will improve as restrictions ease and staff are able to resume more face to face work. There are some positive areas of feedback. 41 families (97.5%) of families reported improvements in family resilience and also highlighted that their financial situation had stabilised or improved.
- 2.2** FFAL is delivered by Social Services. The FFAL is the central access point for parents, carers and professionals in the Vale of Glamorgan, giving information, advice and assistance to improve families' wellbeing, relationships and resilience. FFAL continues to be the single point of entry for The Team Around the Family (FACT), The Vale Parenting Service (VPS) and Vale Youth Wellbeing Service (VYWBS), Young Carer and Parent Carer Assessments and Flying Start Outreach services. FFAL are also taking all referrals for families who will benefit from accessing interventions available through the Child Development Fund. Work is ongoing to ensure the referral process works for all involved agencies and to allow families to access the right support that the right time.

- 2.3** Children, young people and/or families are referred through a central formal referral system. 1442 calls have been received in 2020-21, an increase of 474 on 2018-19, the Families First Management Board have increased staff resources to mitigate much of this and remain vigilant to the annual growth in calls being received.
- 2.4** Disability Focus is centrally co-ordinated by the lead Officer for Families First and consists of a series of interlinked projects all offering different services to families with disabled children and young people.
- 825 families are now registered on the Disability Index, an increase of 133 from 2018/19). The Index newsletter is distributed to 748 families and 1,023 professional partners (1,012 2018-19). Despite continued efforts there have been issues to gain feedback from families on the service.
  - Families First Holiday Club is an informal respite service and has provided 52 disabled children (aged 4-11 years) with access to inclusive play opportunities, over the 24 days on offer there were 497 participations.
  - Inclusive Youth Provision Teenscheme has provided 38 disabled children (aged 12 years+) with access to inclusive play opportunities, with 8 new referrals in 2020/21. A significant number of young people deregistered (44) in April 2020 due to their vulnerabilities and the pandemic and it is envisaged that many of these may re-register when they feel safe to do so. There have been 15 days of respite offered in 2020/21 with between 16 and 19 young people accessing each day. Levels of satisfaction of the service remains very high.
  - Inclusive Youth Provision Speak Up has provided self-advocacy for 24 learning disabled young people and supported them to complete 26 accredited training opportunities in 2020/21. Speak Up provides a platform for disabled children and young people to have a voice and assists them with accessing and being part of their local community. Four of these young people represent Speak Up on local and national forums.
  - Travel Training – this project has been on hold during 2020-21 due to the vulnerable nature of the young people and the practical nature of the project. As national lockdown is eased it is envisaged that this service will restart, giving the young people the key skills and confidence to travel in an independent capacity using public transport.
  - Life Skills - 16 young people benefitted from 1-1 Life Skills (14 -19 years old). The support provided disabled young people with opportunities to develop skills such as personal care, cooking, budgeting etc.
- 2.5** Vale Parenting is delivered by Social Services: the project supports families with children between 0-18 in order to build on strengths and make positive changes, enabling parents to feel more confident in managing; behaviour, routines and boundaries. Services promote emotional wellbeing and support positive family relationships.

There has been a notable increase in referrals received during the pandemic, with 50 received in Quarter 1, and 112 received in Quarter 4 (total referrals in year was 361). Health referrals increased more significantly from 5 in Quarter 1, to 20 in quarter 4.

There has also been an increase in the complexities of families referred as there has been an increase in requests for more 1 to 1 support from 64 in Q1 to 108 in Q4. The main reasons for referral are child behaviour, mental health and family relationships. Of the 21 families undertaking the 1-1 Attachment course 15 completed the course and showed positive outcomes.

The fourth 'Parents as Partners' programme (Tavistock Relationships), co-delivered virtually by Flying Start and Families First, began in January 2021. Four couples attending consistently, and feedback was really positive in terms of improved communication, and strengthened relationship between parents, as well as across the whole family. 78 parents attended formal Group work (Nurturing Programme and handling children's behaviour) with 60 showing positive outcomes and 99 parents attended informal groups (Baby's first year) with 84 showing positive outcomes. Delivery of group sessions has proven difficult due to the pandemic leading to higher than expected disengagements and/or cancellations of training.

- 2.6** Youth Wellbeing service is delivered by Education. The service targets young people aged 8 to 19 years to support their wellbeing and engagement with school and home:
- 53 new referrals were received in 2020/21 (195 lower than 2019-20), the service closed access to all new referrals from April- September to focus on existing clients. The service was supporting between 90 to over a 104 young people at any time. 52 group mentoring sessions were held and 1,666 1-1 mentoring sessions took place mainly via social media platforms or via socially distanced visits when permitted.
  - Young people have struggled to engage in the service although those who have appear to have benefitted. Of the 44 parents/carers and 51 young people who completed their intervention, they reported they were happy with the service they received. Of those on or recently completed their intervention 53 families reported improved family relationships and 36 families reported that they feel they can contribute to changes in their lifestyle/behaviours.
  - Analysing the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) of the young people identified the 3 highest reported ACEs were parental separation/breakdown, mental illness and domestic abuse/violence.
- 2.7** Young Carers is externally commissioned and provided by the YMCA. It provides a respite provision and bespoke 1-1 support in the home for young carers (aged 7 - 18) to help improve the Young Carers and their families' resilience. 90 Young Carers accessed the project compared with 61 in 2020/21. With 20 new referrals in quarter 4 awaiting assessment.

Due to the negative impact of the pandemic and its associated restrictions, there has been a greater need for one to one support which the project workers have prioritised ensuring they can travel and go on a walk with the young people to talk about their feelings and mental wellbeing. This has grown from 21 1-1 support sessions in 2019/20 to 159 in 2020/21. Those receiving education support increased to 25 by quarter 2 but has since reduced below pre COVID-19 levels. The Youth Club did not open during lockdown. However, the YMCA established a virtual weekly youth club which has had regular attendance by youth people (between 41 and 193 young people per quarter). Activities include quizzes, challenges, scavenger hunt and drawing and young people have stated that it's a fun way to meet others, join in games and build up their confidence virtually.

97 users of the service stated they were satisfied with the service with many showing improvements in resilience and improved emotional wellbeing. The advantage of checking these areas is that the low scores can be used to identify and provide additional support.

- 2.8** Central co-ordination delivered by Education. The Co-ordination Team are responsible for the strategic management of the Families First programme in the Vale of Glamorgan. They have supported over 120 individual workforce development opportunities, oversee project developments and report regularly on outcomes for Welsh Government.

### **3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?**

- 3.1** All Families First projects work to support the Five Ways of Working and the Well-being Outcomes.
- 3.2** Welsh Governments Families First guidance (2017) places a strong focus on early intervention and prevention and actively promotes integration and collaboration as ways of working. Each of the local projects undertakes various methods of gathering users' feedback (both service users and that of professionals) to help focus future developments. Funding is agreed on an annual basis, but the ethos is one of longer-term sustainable impact on the delivery of services.
- 3.3** The proposals for the use of Families First funding are in line with the well-being objectives in the Public Services Board's draft Well-being Plan, in particular the well-being objective 'to give children the best start in life'. The proposals are also consistent with work being undertaken by the Cardiff and Vale Regional Partnership Board to address the priorities identified by the Population Needs Assessment.
- 3.4** Families First projects contribute to:
- Well-being Outcome 1: An inclusive and safe Vale. Objective 1 Reducing Poverty and social exclusion: Align relevant activities associated with Families First, Flying Start, Communities First and Supporting People programmes to

maximise opportunities across all programmes. (This is done through the programme management).

- Well-being Outcome 3: An Aspirational and Culturally Vibrant Vale. Secure improved outcomes for groups of learners at risk of underachievement, such as those entitled to free school meals. Increase the learning opportunities for disadvantaged individuals and vulnerable families. Reduce the number of young people not in education, employment and training. (Youth Wellbeing Team and Young Carers Project).
- Well-being Outcome 4: An Active and Healthy Vale. Objective 7: Encouraging and promoting active and healthy lifestyles. Work in partnership to deliver a comprehensive play programme that improves the wellbeing of children and their families. Objective 8: Safeguarding those who are vulnerable and promoting independent living. Implement new ways of working in light of the Social Services Well-being (Wales) Act with a particular focus on the priority work streams of:
  - Provision of information
  - Advice and assistance services
  - Eligibility / assessment of need
  - Planning and promotion of preventative services
  - Workforce
  - Performance measures.

## **4. Resources and Legal Considerations**

### **Financial**

- 4.1** The Council received a grant of £1,331,364 for 2018/19 and is indicative for each year covering the financial years until 2021/22.
- 4.2** Individually contracted Families First projects are required to have their own exit strategies. All Families First projects are stringently monitored and evaluated so that opportunities to build upon and sustain the initiatives can be identified.
- 4.3** Families First is established and dependent on continued Welsh Government funding. The exit strategy will be the cessation of individual project(s) should funding reduce/cease. In the longer term it is envisaged by Welsh Government that consideration will be given to mainstreaming successful elements.
- 4.4** During 2017-18 Welsh Government highlighted its intention to merge seven existing grants (Families First, Flying Start, Promoting Positive Engagement, St David's day fund, Childcare and Play Grant, Communities For Work Plus and Legacy) into a single Grant called the C&C Grant (occasionally referred to as Flexible Funding). Although still early in development this single Grant has an overall budget award of £4,497,000, each projects/programme continues to have single reporting mechanisms within a single overarching plan.

## **Employment**

- 4.5** As revenue funding, Families First supports a range of internal and externally funded projects, all providers employ staff to deliver their project. Each project is monitored closely, and staff establishments are scrutinised by the Families First Management Board to ensure any growth in staffing is matched to project demand.
- 4.6** There are no direct workforce related implications associated with this report. However, if funding is reduced by Welsh Government in future years there could be implications on staff establishments.

## **Legal (Including Equalities)**

- 4.7** Contracts/service level agreements are in place with providers delivering Families First projects which set out clear roles, responsibilities, and outcomes for the delivery of activities.
- 4.8** The Council has to satisfy its public sector duties and obligations under the Equality Act 2010 – Families First Services give due regard to the socio-economic disadvantages experienced by the communities that we serve. All projects also collect protected characteristics data to help ensure services are responding to need.
- 4.9** In accordance with the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Welsh Language standards, the Council also has to consider the impact upon the Welsh language of any decision that it makes. Families First projects establish the language through which users wish to access the service and where possible services are provided through the medium of Welsh.
- 4.10** Families First projects also work to reduce crime and disorder by tackling the underlying causes of family and youth deprivation; targeting young people most at risk of becoming disengaged and not in education, employment and training (NEET) and providing opportunities to stay in education and training.

## **5. Background Papers**

None