

Report of the Strategic Director of Children's Services to the meeting of Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee to be held on 17 November 2021

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Subject:

Families First Programme 2021-2022

Summary statement:

This report will provide an update on highlights from the Families First Programme and focus on areas of progress, action in the next period and areas of concern and potential concern.

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Portfolio:

Children & Families

Overview & Scrutiny Area:

Children's Services

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report will provide an update on highlights from the improvement journey of Supporting Families programme delivered locally in Bradford and to provide a performance update on the Families First (FF) Programme in 2021/22.

2. BACKGROUND

The criteria for the programme is that every family will have at least two of these six headline problems:

- 1) Parents or children involved in crime or anti-social behaviour
- 2) Children who have not been attending school regularly
- 3) Children who need help
- 4) Adults out of work or at risk of financial exclusion and young people at risk of worklessness
- 5) Families affected by domestic violence and abuse
- 6) Parents and children with a range of health problems

The measure of success of the programme focuses on achieving 'significant and sustained' progress for families. Therefore, the principles of having a lead professional who facilitates and coordinates a multiagency response to the family's needs, one whole family assessment and one family action plan is required. A Family Outcomes Plan has been developed within Bradford in order to facilitate this.

There has been a significant turnaround in the performance of Bradford's delivery for 2020/21. The previous position was that Bradford was placed on a 'Recovery Plan' and had increased MHCLG intervention and scrutiny due to not meeting its targets of the numbers of families being worked with in a whole family way and the number of family outcomes achieving significant and sustained progress. The department recognised that the programme needed to be properly resourced and due to having joint Service and Improvement Programme support this has enhanced performance and therefore accelerated at scale and pace.

2.1 How Supporting Families Contributes to the Strategic Direction across the District

- a) Supporting Families contributes to delivering the Early Help Strategy for Children and Families for Level 3 (Multiple and Complex Needs) Lead Practitioners and Team around the Family approach which builds confidence with partners and families through Bradford's Prevention and Early Help Partnership.
- b) Early Help System Guide (MHCLG Transformation Assessment) will help deliver and drive Children's system leadership through its action plan and feedback from the national team.
- c) Families First Commissioned Services - keyworker service for approx. 500 vulnerable families that meet the national 'Supporting Families' criteria and the

locally set criteria. Barnardo's and Families First Police Team (West Yorkshire Police) provide key work and youth support through a 'Lead Practitioner Model;' with one worker, one family, one plan and actively support external Lead Practitioners in a Team Around the Family (TAF) approach

2.2 Key Areas of Progress

In December 2020, Bradford achieved 100% of the 20/21 target of 1,017 families, 3 months before the end of the programme. These families have had to achieve sustained and significant progress of 6 months without regression to post family support.

2.3 Providing and maintaining a stable workforce:

- A dedicated Programme Lead recruited to oversee the strategic leadership and governance of the programme;
- A dedicated Practice Lead in post, to offer operational management, to improve internal and external processes, to manage the FF team and the commissioned services; and full time analysts were recruited, to carry out improvements to data practices.

2.4 What we are doing to improve:

- Data maturity
There is a large amount of data and intelligence that is requested by Central Government from Bradford's and its commissioned partners who deliver services to families. In order to collate this efficiently there is a need to transform the current Councils IT and Liquid Logic System's in order to capture outcomes and evidence needed for audit and monthly submissions to Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. This is being mitigated through Families First Data analysts who are employed as part of the core programme team to ensure what we have is fit for purpose. Additional to this there is some system development work being carried out as part of the Childrens IT end to end Programme
- Workforce development
There is an opportunity to further transform public services to upskill the children's workforce to help deliver of the Families First key objectives. Part of the sign up to the national programme is to further capacity build local practitioners who work with children and families to carry out the lead practitioner role (this role helps coordinate the families relationship with other agencies who provide services to the family) and to carry out and Early Help Assessment and Team around the family reviews which are then centrally recorded on the Councils EHM Liquid Logic system. There is a need to have a workforce development strategy that pulls together an offer of training and support for partners to access. This is being mitigated and progressed through the Prevention and Early Help Partnership. A first draft has been produced and will be consulted on in December 2021 and January 2022

2.2 **Current Performance 2021/2022**

On 28th January 2021, MHCLG confirmed a 12-month extension to the programme for 2021/22 outlining the following funding for Bradford:

- £1,307,000 Service Transformation Funding: core funding for providing intensive family support services and increasing the maturity of your Early Help system; and
- £848,000 Funding for Successful Outcomes (PbR): 1,060 successful family outcomes that can be claimed between April 2021 and March 2022.
- Bradford has achieved 513 Family Outcomes which equates to 53% of its target (April – September claims period) and is currently performing above the national average at this point of the programme.
- The trajectory of Bradford's performance is 100% of targets and family outcomes achieved by March 2022 or sooner.

2.3 **Areas of Concern or Potential Concern**

Families First Programme is 100% funded by Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (Previously MHCLG) and therefore future funding will depend on the outcome of the treasury's spending review.

There has been a recent announcement from National Supporting Families Team that funding will continue for the next three years (2022-25) which will ensure the sustainability of services to families in Bradford for that period. It was also communicated that the programme will be expanded. The Spending Review included an additional £200 million for Supporting Families nationally. This is around a 40% real-terms uplift in funding for the programme by 2024-25, taking total planned investment across the next three years to nearly £700 million.

3. **OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

3.1 There are no other considerations.

4. **FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL**

N/a

5. **RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES**

5.1 **Risks with cessation of funding**

5.1.1 Risks to Families

The average number of families worked with per year for each of the contracts are;

- Families First VCS 344
- Intensive Youth Support 72
- Police 80

This would mean approximately 496 families not receiving a service if funding ends in March 2022

5.1.2 Risk to Local Authority

- Removal of services would result in Local Authorities Family Support Workers picking up this work to ensure families received support. At present, there are a number of families on Hub waiting lists for a service. The VCS and Police Commissioned Service assist with any actual/potential waiting lists within the authority, on a weekly basis, which reduces the wait time for families. By removing this capacity, Hubs would potentially need to increase the staffing levels and/or waiting list times would significantly increase.
- Children's welfare would be a risk, if support was not offered in a timely manner and family vulnerabilities increased.
- Long term, this may result in more families escalating to requiring a statutory service from Social Workers and increasing the demand for Children's Social Care.

5.1.3 Risk to the Commissioned Partnership

- Loss of 20 FTE key workers from the District
- Loss of dedicated Early Help Police Team (6 in total)
- Potential loss/reduction in VCS management teams. Ability to represent partnership at district partnership meetings
- Potential loss of specialist provision e.g. emotional mental health – alternative learning opportunities – youth work interventions
- Loss of formal partnership arrangements with 4 VCS organisations
- Loss of income to small/medium sized organisations based with the District – ripple effect this will have into other work streams
- Loss of representation at Early Help Locality Hub Panels

6. LEGAL APPRAISAL

6.1 Not applicable.

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

7.1 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Not applicable.

7.2 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS

Not applicable.

7.3 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

Not applicable.

7.4 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

Not applicable.

7.5 TRADE UNION

Not applicable.

7.6 WARD IMPLICATIONS

The Ofsted judgement affects all wards.

7.7 AREA COMMITTEE ACTION PLAN IMPLICATIONS (for reports to Area Committees only)

Not applicable.

7.8 IMPLICATIONS FOR CORPORATE PARENTING

All improvements across Children's Services will strengthen the Council's ability to discharge its Corporate Parenting responsibilities.

7.9 ISSUES ARISING FROM PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESMENT

None; the Ofsted report and Notice of Improvement are in the public domain.

8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

8.1 None.

9. OPTIONS

9.1 None.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 That this Committee notes the contents of this report and the progress being made.

11. APPENDICES

11.1 N/a

12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

12.1 None.