

DATA LABEL: PUBLIC



SOCIAL POLICY - POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

REDESIGN OF INTENSIVE & CRISIS SUPPORT SERVICES - FAMILIES TOGETHER

REPORT BY HEAD OF SOCIAL POLICY

A. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of the report is to inform the Panel of the redesign of intensive and crisis support services in West Lothian and the evaluation the Families Together Service.

B. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Panel notes the work that has been undertaken through the redesign of intensive and crisis support services in West Lothian and the evaluation of the Families Together Service

C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

I Council Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focusing on our customers' needs.• Being honest, open and accountable.• Making best use of our resources.• Working in partnership
II Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)	Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 The Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009 Children's Hearing (Scotland) Act 2011
III Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers	No implications.
IV Impact on performance and performance Indicators	There is a robust suite of both high level and management performance indicators covering both looked after children and child protection Achieving a shift in the balance of care
V Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement	Significantly reducing the number of young people accommodated at a time of crisis People most at risk are protected and supported to achieve improved life chances
VI Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)	None
VII Consideration at PDSP	None

VIII Other consultations None

D. TERMS OF REPORT

D.1 Background

As part of the Transforming Your Council (TYC) Programme Social Policy is required to make efficiencies of £3.635 million. The intensive and crisis support element and introduction of the Families Together Service has been designed to help deliver savings connected to shifting the balance of care (such as reducing the number of children and young people accommodated within residential schools, etc).

D.2 Overview

In recent years West Lothian Council has been successful in reducing the number of children and young people entering external resources such as secure care, residential schools and education day provision. However, in order to achieve further reductions, and to deliver efficiencies, significant service redesign was required. This has involved a further change in the balance of care for looked after children as well as a robust multi-agency approach to early intervention and prevention.

In November 2018, it was agreed that the preferred model for the delivery of Intensive and Crisis Support in West Lothian would be multi-disciplinary with key disciplines co-located and to enable them to can work effectively together to ensure that children at risk of accommodation receive immediate access to the correct type of support.

Learning from the success of similar initiatives in other areas, it was agreed that the team would include staff from the following disciplines alongside family support workers and managers:

- Speech and Language Therapy
- Mental Health Staff – ideally a psychologist and mental health link worker
- Outreach Teaching staff
- Outreach Foster carers
- Family Group Decision Making

The new service is central to achieving the following two key aims:

1. Achieving a shift in the balance of care
2. Significantly reducing the number of young people accommodated at a time of crisis

In the new model services users are assessed by need, rather than by age. Although a significant proportion of crisis work is with teenagers, the eligibility criteria for the service is “children who are assessed as in crisis or are likely to be accommodated if appropriate immediate intensive support is not provided”. The new model builds on the success of the existing Whole Family Support Service, which offered intensive support using a family intervention approach.

In order to resource a team of the size and skill base required, increased financial support was required to provide intensive support.

The long-term intension is to fund an intensive support and crisis intervention service through the transfer funds from savings made elsewhere, for example within the residential units. The support is required to be delivered in a way which reduces the number of children accommodated in residential care. The plan was that the unused residential accommodation could potentially provide a base for the new service to operate from while a room would be dedicated for safe space overnight provision. Outreach foster care and emergency foster care provision would be built into the model so that a range

of crisis supports would be employed with the view to retain children at home and return them swiftly should a period of respite be required.

D.3 Challenges

It was recognised that the development of this new model had a range of associated challenges and risks. These included the possibility that the new team would not be able to prevent all crisis accommodations or avoid escalation to out of authority placements, alongside the fact that the three residential houses were at capacity.

D.4 Investment and development

In order to progress this workstream, a one-year bridging arrangement was agreed to create capacity within the residential houses and develop the approach skills and experience of staff in supporting this cohort of children and young people.

It was also agreed to significantly increase the capacity of the Whole Family Support Service to focus on crisis work, children at imminent risk of accommodation and those accommodated in a crisis. The intention was that this team would be trained and supported to respond to situations which currently result in young people being accommodated in a crisis and supporting children to return home quickly if they are accommodated in a crisis, thus providing the opportunity to test the model locally and work to reduce the numbers of children in the residential houses.

Funding was also made available for Family Group Decision Making Co-ordinators to help identify supports within extended family networks.

The intention was that the learning from the team would be used to identify the specific skill set and mix of disciplines required to create a robust Intensive and Crisis Support Service specific to the needs of West Lothian.

Based on the predicted levels of support required to avoid crisis accommodations, drawn from estimates from practice teams and experience within the Whole Family Support Service. The following additional staff were recruited:

- 1 Team Manager (Band I)
- 9 Family Support Workers (Band F)
- 2 FGDM co-ordinators

The staff were recruited and the team formed in December 2019.

D.5 Families Together

The approach used by the team is Family Intervention: an intensive keyworker approach. Each worker works intensively and creatively with a small caseload of young people and their parents/carers, supporting them to improve relationships, build resilience, change negative behaviours, improve educational engagement and live successfully within the community.

Families Together consists of 18 Family Support Workers from a range of professional disciplines. In addition, the team is co-located alongside 3 Family Support Workers from the Looked After Children Attainment Team, a joint Education and Social Policy initiative, funded by the Scottish Government, which aims to improve the educational outcomes for West Lothian's, Looked After Children. It was hoped that this culture of joint work between Education and Social Policy would extend across Families Together.

The team was initially managed by 2 Full Time Team Managers and this recently increased to three managers.

The Family Support Workers work across West Lothian, with two main bases at Strathbrock Homeless Unit and Letham Young Persons Centre. The service is open from 0730 – 2200 during the week and 0900 – 2300 at weekends.

D.6 Evaluation of Families Together

An evaluation of the Families together was completed in December 2020 the evaluation noted the following:

D.7 Referrals

The Families Together Screening Group received a total of 116 referrals for consideration between 01/01/2020 and 02/11/2020 as detailed below:

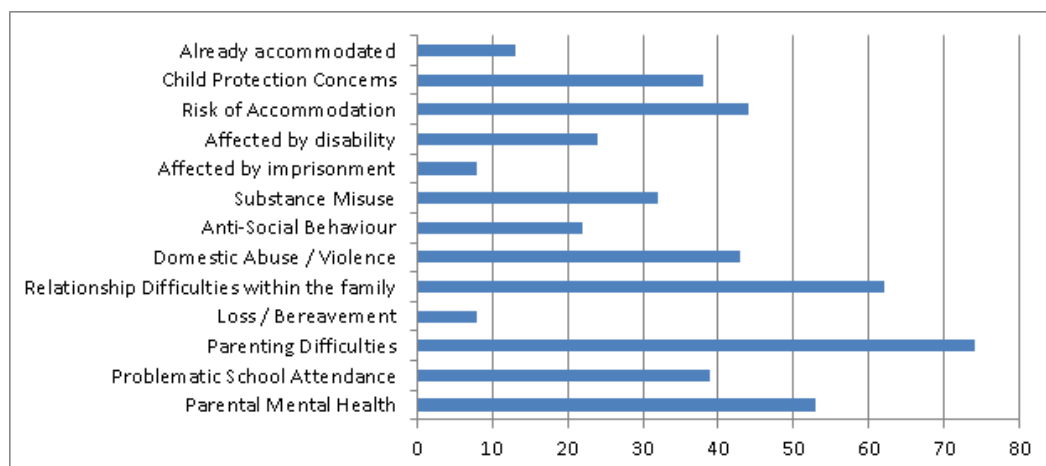
Breakdown of Referral sources		Breakdown of Referral Outcome	
Children & Families North Team	28	Families Together	62
Children & Families South Team	20	Children 1 st (FGDM & COZ)	10
Duty & Child Protection Team	19	Early Years Services	5
Education	14	Early Intervention Services	4
CDS	8	CDS	3
Health	7	MHWP	4
CAMHS	5	Circle	2
Youth Justice	4	YAP	2
Early Intervention Services	2	More Info Required	12
Early Years Services	2	Referral not Appropriate	3
Other	7	Other	9
Total	116	Total	116

D.8 Caseload

- Between 01/01/2020 and 02/11/2020 Families Together supported a total of 146 families at various stages of intervention.
- Between 01/01/2020 and 02/11/2020 Families Together ended their involvement with 40 families, 29 families reached the end of a period of intensive family support, and 10 families were closed after a short period of support: of these 2 required support only for a brief period, 5 decided they did not want Families Together support, 1 was assessed as an inappropriate referral, 1 was moved to secure accommodation and 1 was supported during the move to another placement.
- Families Together are supporting a total of 20 families who were referred in a crisis, this represents 33 children between ages of 2-16. These cases are included in the current families receiving support
- The average length of interventions is around 265 days, roughly 8 and a half months
- There were 46 crisis referrals over the evaluation timeframe. A sample of 20 cases was undertaken.
- Of the 20 children; 11 children were deemed at risk of accommodation out with their family at point of referral. None were brought into alternative care provision during the period of Families Together involvement

D.9 Presenting Issues

The key presenting issues are detailed below:



D.10 Outcomes

The key outcome achieved was that children at risk of accommodation have remained at home as detailed below:

- OPEN CASES - 46 out of 52 (88%) children who were at risk of accommodation have remained at home. 7 children became accommodated, 6 of which children were at risk and 1 that was not considered a risk at the beginning of intervention
- CLOSED CASES - 29 out of 33 (90%) children who were at risk of accommodation have remained at home
- Children already accommodated were returned home:
- OPEN CASES - 5 out of 12 (41%) children who were accommodated at entry were successfully returned home, 7 children currently remain in accommodation.
- CLOSED CASES - 2 out of 2 (100%) children who were accommodated at entry were successfully returned home during Families Together involvement.

D.11 Shifting the Balance of Care

The table below shows that the service was successful in supporting a shift in the balance of care, with a significant reduction in the number of young people, aged 11plus starting to be Looked After.

Young People Starting to be Looked After – Age 11 Plus

	Dec 18 – Dec 19	Dec 19 – Dec 20
Residential School	1	1
Residential Unit	7	1
Secure Accommodation	1	1
Foster Care	9	6
Friends/Relatives/Kinship	14	8
TOTAL	32	17

D.12 Crisis Work

Families Together workers reported that they had adopted different models of crisis intervention on a case to case basis. When dealing with a crisis where the child was in danger of becoming accommodated a strength-based model of intervention was

adopted, and was most effective where families were encouraged to look at their skills and strengths to come up with shared solutions, plans and goals.

Once the initial crisis passed the team shifted their focus onto more intensive interventions with the onus being on longer term plans to enable the families to identify their abilities, strengths and skills. This was done with a supportive and nurturing approach to enhance the family's ability to manage their issues in a positive manner.

The evaluation notes that there was a clear understanding of the needs of young people and that working on a 1-1 basis helped with personal safety and the consequences, self-esteem and confidence. It was also noted that the consistency of allocated Family Support Worker was key to establishing good relationship with families and achieving positive outcomes.

It was noted that Families Together worked extensively with the Duty and Child Protection Team, Practice Team's and SCET (Social Care Emergency Team). A shared planner was used to track all of the duty work and to ensure a shared understanding of what was required.

The evaluation highlighted the importance of responding at crisis point as it allowed for intensive work to begin early and help with reflection on issues and behaviours. It is noted that this resulted in service users being more open to accessing and accepting support and guidance.

The key positive outcomes resulting from this work included:

- lower levels of children and young People escalating into Foster Care or Residential houses
- children and young people being supported to remain cared for by their own parents or family members with support and relationships developed and repaired;
- families feeling supported and developing coping skills and confidence, and families feeling empowered.

D.13 Intensive Support

In keeping with Family Intervention principles, Whole Family Support Service staff were allocated 5 to 8 families each, at various stages of intervention and intensity.

This family intervention approach is still applied, however in order to ensure that staff had adequate space to respond effectively to the crisis referrals, caseloads were limited to 6 families per worker.

There has been a lot of valuable learning during the pilot period. Clearer referral criteria are in place and the service works closely with SCET to establish good joint working practice and avoid duplication.

Feedback from stakeholders and families notes that the flexible working hours are crucial to the success of the service, as is the creativity and flexibility of the staff in responding to assessed need.

The evaluation notes that a range of approaches are used including crisis intervention and task centre work and that building robust relationships is essential to the success of positive outcomes for any family.

Letham young person's unit has been furnished to include a chill out/sensory room, art room, games room, kindles, x box, guitars, tv, nail kit, house corner and toys etc. Letham has been used as a Space for children/young people/families to relax, reflect

, talk through issues; or focus on an activity such as art, games, baking. It will also be used for focussed work with allocated families and rooms can be booked by other professionals e.g. Social Work, LAC Teachers, Champions Board etc.

D.14 Family Group Decision Making

Since April 2020 Children First have been contracted to deliver a combined FGDM and Kinship Care and Support service in West Lothian to children, young people and families affected by Mental Health issues.

This service is enhanced by the provision of advocacy, emotional wellbeing support, support with the family plan, money advice and in particular kinship care support, as required by The Children and Young people (Scotland) Act 2014-part 13 Section 71.

D.15 Referral's

The Family Wellbeing Service has recorded the following data in relation to FGDM, Kinship Support, YP MHWB.

Quarter 1 1st April – 30th June 2020

FGDM	Kinship Care Support	Early Intervention – Young People
16 Family referrals (19 children)	9 family referrals (13 children and 11 carers)	3 referrals for young people including support for 4 parents
21 children work toward family meeting/review	22 families continued support (30 children)	13 ongoing interventions with YP including family work with 12 parents
2 family meeting and 1 review	43 children remained or continued in kinship care	2 teenagers returned home following family meetings 1 teenager remained in care of local authority
2 family referrals closed, 1 did not want FGDM, 1 child remained with family	2 family referrals were closed	1 intervention was closed

Quarter 2 1st July – 30th September 2020

FGDM	Kinship Care Support
22 new family referrals (39 children)	6 Referrals (8 carers and 6 children)
27 children worked towards family meeting from previous quarter	21 families continued support (24 carers and 29 children)
13 Family meetings (10 initial, 3 reviews)	1 support to family was closed – support not required family settled.
8 referrals closed - all children remained within family	

D.16 Overview of the findings of the Evaluation

The evaluation noted that the number of children in residential care has remained low throughout the period of the pilot and highlighted that the team were generally successful in supporting children to remain at home (88% of children referred who were assessed as at risk of accommodation and 100% of those referred in a crisis).

It did highlight however, that parenting skills and practical skills did not improve at the rate that they did normally within WFSS. It is likely that this is due to the reduction of home visiting caused by COVID restrictions and the reduction in time spent with allocated families due to the high level of duty and crisis work undertaken over recent months.

It also noted that Letham had been used successfully as a cooking off space provision for families in crisis but that there was no overnight use of Letham for children at risk of accommodation. The main reason for the lack of overnight use was staff availability at short notice.

The evaluation notes that parenting difficulties, relationship difficulties and poor parental mental health are the most significant issues affecting all families referred.

E. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

The investment in Families Together has been beneficial to children, young people and their families in West Lothian. The service has been well received by partner agencies. The service has been effective in assisting to reduce the numbers of children and young people accommodated in residential resources or out with their local communities. Family Group Decision Making has been intrinsic to the success of the service.

Following positive evaluation of the pilot, Families Together is currently in the process of recruiting, so there will be twenty permanent family support worker posts and there will continue to be three team managers. Letham has now been utilised as an overnight provision for young people, which has prevented accommodation. The plan is to have standby staff availability so there are assurances of being able to staff Letham overnight when required.

F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

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