

Agenda item 5

To: **Houston, Crosslee, Linwood, Riverside and Erskine Local Area Committee**

On: **25th November 2015**

Report by: **Director of Children's Services**

Heading: **Families First Approach – Establishing additional Families First Core Teams in Gallowhill, Johnstone and Foxbar**

1. Summary

- 1.1. This report provides information on the progress in establishing additional Families First Core Teams in Gallowhill, Johnstone and Foxbar localities.
- 1.2. The Council meeting on 25th June 2015 approved proposals for deploying significant investment in response to the recommendations contained in the Tackling Poverty Commission report.
- 1.3. Council agreed to allocate £1 million from the tackling poverty fund to extend the successful and innovative Families First Core Team approach into three new localities of Gallowhill, Johnstone and Foxbar.
- 1.4. The Families First approach is embedded in the Early Years Strategy and ensures that families with children aged 0-8 in these areas will be supported to give children the best start in life through the provision of a local, family-centred service.
- 1.5. The Families First Core Team model has been delivering in the Linwood and Ferguslie areas since November 2013. A recent evaluation by Glasgow University found that the Families First approach including the effectiveness of the Core Team as 'overwhelmingly positive'.
- 1.6. Work is being taken forward to recruit staff to Core Teams and it is expected the new service will start in the three additional localities early in 2016. In addition a community engagement process has commenced to ensure that the priorities for the Families First Core Team will be identified by local parents and children in each of the localities.

2. Recommendations

2.1. It is recommended that the Local Area Committee notes:

- [a] the decision of Council to allocate £1 Million to extend the provision of the Families First Model to Gallowhill, Johnstone and Foxbar;
- [b] that the recruitment process has commenced and the additional Families First Core Teams service is expected to commence in Gallowhill, Johnstone and Foxbar early in 2016; and
- [c] a process of engaging the local community has commenced to ensure that the Families First priorities are identified by local parents and children.

3. Background

3.1. Renfrewshire's Community Planning Partnership is committed to ensuring that all children and young people in Renfrewshire are given the best start in life. The Early Years Strategy was approved by the council's education policy board on 7 March 2013. This strategy commits the partnership to a family centred approach to improving outcomes for children and families.

3.2. The strategy consists of 3 approaches:

- 1) a family-centred approach within the locality;
- 2) a family-centred outreach approach;
- 3) support for families with older children.

3.3. Following extensive consultation an implementation plan was developed prior to full implementation in the autumn of 2013. An early years steering board was established in order to provide clear governance and accountability for the implementation of the strategy. This board reports to the Children and Young People Thematic Board and draws its membership from across the community planning partnership.

3.4. Although the early years strategy is at an early stage of implementation current progress is already demonstrating indications of a positive impact on children and families in Renfrewshire. In order to determine the impact and effectiveness in achieving agreed outcomes an evaluation plan is in place. This comprises two strands:

- I. an outcome focussed self evaluation framework involving ongoing monitoring of the implementation plan by the evaluation team and
- II. an external evaluation.

3.5. The family-centred approach within the locality includes the development of a 'core team model' after a period of consultation with families in each locality and partners across the Community Planning Partnership.

- 3.6. The Families First core teams were established in Linwood and Ferguslie localities in November 2013. The Linwood Families First team is based in Woodlands Primary School.
- 3.7. The external evaluation of the family centred approach in Linwood and Ferguslie by Glasgow University has now been completed and a summary of the final report is attached as an appendix to this report. The key findings of the evaluation report are "overwhelmingly positive". The report highlights a number of key strengths of the approach. These are that, to better meet the needs of families, services should be:
- Faster in response and more able to devote time to building up and maintaining relationships with families. Initial presenting issues may just be one of many that families face and it takes time to understand parents and children's, often complex, situations
 - Willing to model appropriate behaviour for families rather than merely 'instructing them what to do'
 - Building relationships with families based on mutual respect and relating to them on their terms
 - Prepared to 'go the extra mile'. Services which are able to operate in a flexible manner and go beyond families expectations of what is required are held in high esteem by the community
 - Reducing the number of agencies families have to deal with at times of crisis. Having a one-stop service with an emphasis on building strong professional client relationship helps maintain parental confidence at times in their lives when self-belief and self-esteem is often low. At such times families are often ill prepared to cope with the demands imposed on them by any number of professional agencies.
- 3.8. One of the recommendations of Renfrewshire's Tackling Poverty Commission was to extend the successful Families First core team model.
- 3.9. The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) has been the defining foundation for identifying those potential additional localities within Renfrewshire which would benefit most from Families First input. The SIMD identifies a number of areas of deprivation and the specific issues and challenges that these areas face in relation to health, income, education, employment, access to services and crime incidence. The areas of Gallowhill, Johnstone and Foxbar were subsequently identified for the extension of the core team model.
- 3.10. The recruitment process for the Families First Core Teams to allow the establishment of the service in the new areas of Gallowhill, Johnstone and Foxbar is being progressed. It is expected that the new team members will be in post by January 2016 allowing the service to commence around this time.
- 3.11. A consultation of families and community groups in each of the localities took place between September and October to identify the views and needs of each of the communities. The results of the three consultations will determine the scope and nature of the service to be provided.
- 3.12. The exact location of each of the base office of the team is currently being identified.

- 3.13. The teams will make strong links with all schools, pre-5 centres and other partner agencies in the area such as Health Visitors.
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Implications of this report

1. Financial Implications

The costs of the extension of the Families First Model is contained in the allocation of £1 Million from the Tackling Poverty Commission fund.

2. HR and Organisational Development Implications

None.

3. Community Plan/Council Plan Implications

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| Children and Young People | - Our children and young people will have the best start in life |
| Community Care, Health and Well-being | - Closer and stronger links are developing across all CPP partners. |
| Empowering our Communities | - Families will become more resilient and empowered to make positive choices. |

4. Legal Implications

None.

5. Property/Assets Implications

None.

6. Information Technology Implications

None.

7. Equality and Human Rights Implications

- (a) The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report because for example it is for noting only. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.

8. Health and Safety Implications

None.

9. Procurement Implications

None.

10. Risk Implications

None.

11. Privacy Impact
None.

List of Background Papers

- (a) Giving our Children the Best Start in Life: Renfrewshire's Strategy for the Early Years
- (b) Glasgow University Evaluation of Families First
- (c) Action Plan to Tackle Poverty

The foregoing background papers will be retained within children's services for inspection by the public for the prescribed period of four years from the date of the meeting. The contact officer within the service is John Trainer, Acting Head of Early Learning and Inclusion, 0141 618 6860, john.trainer@renfrewshire.gsx.gov.uk.

Children's Services

JG

19/10/15

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University of Glasgow

**Renfrewshire Families First Evaluation
The Robert Owen Centre for Educational Change**

SUMMARY APRIL 2015

Renfrewshire Families First Evaluation

SUMMARY

The Robert Owen Centre for Educational Change
Stuart Hall, Kevin Lowden, Georgina Wardle,
Natalie Watters, Kristinn Hermannsson, Niamh Friel

Renfrewshire Council
Jennifer Macmillan-Currie

April 2015

The Integrated Children's Services Plan indicates how we will work towards delivering this long term vision and explains how services working with children, young people and their families will provide support to achieve improved outcomes for Renfrewshire's children over the next three years.

The most significant influence on children making the best start in life is the care and nurture of their parents. Our universal services of education and health work to support parents to make a positive impact on children and young people. It is our aim to prevent problems or difficulties from arising where at all possible, but when they do, we want to act with parents to resolve issues as quickly and effectively as possible.

Reach for a Better Future outlines our approach based on prevention and early and effective intervention.

The prevention approach means that parents, with the support of services when needed, will continue to focus on positive outcomes for most children by stopping problems before they arise.

The second element of our approach is to identify and intervene early when problems do occur. Evidence and research shows that early and effective intervention improves outcomes for children, young people and their families.

Using these approaches will help services support families, children and young people to achieve the outcomes that all of our children deserve.

Councillor Jacqueline Henry

Chair of the Children and Young People Thematic Board
Renfrewshire Council

Key findings

The findings presented here are based on 71 interviews with parents/carers and 56 interviews with professionals in the Linwood and Ferguslie neighbourhoods.

Overall, findings from the major stakeholders in the Families First neighbourhood projects; parents, Core Team members, and partner organisations have been overwhelmingly positive. Interviews with parents have clearly demonstrated that the initiative has had a positive, and in some instances a profound, impact on the lives of families in the Linwood and Ferguslie neighbourhoods. For many of these families referral, from partner agencies or by self-referral, has brought immediate support from dedicated Core Team members. Often, initial presenting problems have represented the tip of an iceberg and many of the families that the project has worked with have, over a period of time, revealed a series of additional and often complex underlying problems and difficulties. Yet even in these situations the Core Teams have shown themselves able to cope, both with the range of issues and with the complexity of some family situations. Many of the partner agencies that the project has engaged with over the last two years have reported that the Project's presence has resulted in benefits to their organisations. For some this has been the result of referring families onto a service that they believe is best placed to deal with their clients' issues, for others it has meant an improvement in their working environment. For example, class teachers spoke about how, with Core Team support, disruptive children have become more settled in class and better able to learn. Consequently, teachers then spend more time thinking about teaching rather than worrying about class control. Social work and health visitors noted that support from the Core Team had frequently prevented situations and issues from becoming more serious.

If the *Core Team Initiative* is as successful as the evaluation indicates then there are important implications for local authority services. It is clear that the nature of the project has resulted in a service to local families which is proactive and responsive to a wide range of needs. Indeed, parents often contrasted their 'positive' experience of the team with their 'negative' experiences of other local and central government authority services. The messages from this evaluation are clear, to better meet the needs of families, services should be:

- Faster in response and more able to devote time to building up and maintaining relationships with families. Initial presenting issues may just be one of many that families face and it takes time to understand parents and children's, often complex, situations
- Willing to model appropriate behaviour for families rather than merely 'instructing them what to do'
- Building relationships with families based on mutual respect and relating to them on their terms
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- Reducing the number of agencies families have to deal with at times of crisis. Having a one-stop service with an emphasis on building strong professional client relationship helps maintain parental confidence at times in their lives when self-belief and self-esteem is often low. At such times families are often ill prepared to cope with the demands imposed on them by any number of professional agencies.

Findings from Core Team staff, parents and representatives of partner services indicated broad agreement on the impact of the project.

Core Team Staff

- The Core Team have helped many local families deal with a wide range of issues, from financial difficulties, through parent and child health issues, relationship difficulties and child behavioural problems.
- The financial advice workers have brought an added dimension to the work of the Project, so much so, that benefit checks for families have become routinised into the work of the project. Between November 2013 and March June 2014 the project secured over £573,000 in additional income for local families. They also helped local people manage more than £25,000 of debt.
- The Project's approach to working with families, adopting a 'walking with them' ethos while encouraging parents to take increasing responsibility for dealing with the issues appears to have been highly successful and there is little evidence of families becoming dependent on family workers.
- Staff highlighted the benefits of having a locally based team operating in a flexible and responsive manner with an ability to deal with a range of issues and difficulties.

Parents/Carers

- The *Core Team Initiative* quickly established itself in the Ferguslie and Linwood neighbourhoods and built trusting relationships with local families.
- The project has made a notable positive impact to the lives of families in the two communities. In some instances, the support has had an immediate impact on families lives, for example, in preventing eviction and securing additional benefits. In other instances, impact may take longer and, in the case of families with mental health problems, may require cyclical support from the project.
- There is good evidence that the approach used by workers in modeling behaviour, advocacy and 'walking' parents through issues has begun to build the skills and resilience of those in vulnerable families and, therefore, contribute to the wider social capital of their communities.

- Many parents contrasted the positive ethos and approach of the Core Team with that of other public services including; social work, health visitors and the jobcentre where personnel were regularly viewed as patronising and judgmental.
- Parents also commented on the fact that Core Team members were able to spend more time with them than they had experienced with other public services where engagement time was more limited.
- Parents who had engaged with the energy advice service spoke positively about the help they had received. Among the encouraging outcomes were instances where families had switched to more economical tariffs, been supported to apply for insulation grants, or been informed on how to manage their heating systems more efficiently.
- Those parents who had been matched with a Homestart volunteer were very pleased with the support they received and were particularly appreciative of the fact that the volunteers had given up their own time to help other families.

Partner Agencies

- Partner agencies regularly reported the *Core Team initiative* as an asset for supporting families in the communities in which they worked.
- There was little evidence of service overlap between the Core Team and other public services.
- Referral systems from other agencies had grown over the life of the project. Local schools, nurseries, and health visitors had become regular referrers.
- A number of partners suggested that the *Core Team project* was playing a role in building the social capacity and resilience of the communities.
- The *Core Team project* was having a positive impact on the work of other services in the neighbourhoods.

Conclusion

Renfrewshire Council's *Core Team Initiative* represents a bold investment on the part of the Council to develop a locally based early intervention approach. It is clear that the success of this project will influence the future development of Council services including Education and Social Work. Findings from the evaluation indicates that the project has had a substantial impact on the lives of many parents and children living in the Ferguslie and Linwood areas. Moreover, in terms of measurable impact the project has secured more than half a million pounds in additional benefit income for families in the localities.