



Children, Young People and Education Committee

Tuesday 6 December 2022

REPORT TITLE:	BREAKING THE CYCLE
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

REPORT SUMMARY

This report provides the Children, Young People and Education Committee with the first of three reports on the Breaking the Cycle programme, focused on 'change for the individual'. Two future reports will detail 'change for professionals and services' and 'change for organisations and systems'. The Breaking the Cycle programme is a key strand of the early help and prevention approach, informing long-term system change and contributing to demand reduction for acute services. As the first programme to launch following the Council adopting the Prevention Policy and Prevention Framework in October 2021, the series of reports will provide an overview of learning, impact and provide direction to workforce remodelling activity.

The report provides combined information on the eight Breaking the Cycle projects, their impact, and shares what has been learned from participants about their experience and what is working for them.

The report is aligned to priorities of Wirral Council's Plan 2026:

- Working for brighter futures for our children, young people and their families by breaking the cycle of poor outcomes and raising the aspirations of every child in Wirral.
- Working for safe and pleasant communities where our residents feel safe, and where they want to live and raise their families.
- Working for happy, active and healthy lives where people are supported, protected and inspired to live independently.

The report supports the Health and Wellbeing Strategy Priority 3, identifying the elements of Cradle to Career and Breaking the Cycle programmes that are making the biggest difference to local families, through evaluation and ongoing discussions with local people.

This is not a key decision.

RECOMMENDATION

The Children, Young People and Education Committee is recommended to endorse the development of services for children and families based on the findings in the report and agree to receive two further learning reports.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 The Breaking the Cycle programme is a cross-Council, multi-agency programme which produces valuable learning about the experiences of people facing multiple disadvantage and considers how well the local system responds not only to meeting need, but to preventing the need for future support. The Breaking the Cycle programme provides opportunity to test and learn which can inform operational and strategic system change.
- 1.2 The Council has a duty to ensure provision of a comprehensive range of early help services for children and young people.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 No other options have been considered as the Breaking the Cycle programme links to a range of strategic priorities and provides learning to inform future operating models that can promote efficient use of resources.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Breaking the Cycle programme launched in October 2021, bringing together 8 catalyst projects for people facing multiple disadvantage and living in the borough's most deprived wards. Programme delivery was endorsed by the Children, Young People and Education Committee, with full details contained in Appendix 1- Breaking the Cycle Prospectus.
- 3.2 Following 12 months of delivery, this report is the first in a series of 3 which will consider impact and learning from the programme. The original prospectus detailed 'Ambition for Our People' in 3 categories: 'Change for the Individual', 'Change for Professionals and Services' and 'Change for Organisations and Systems'. This report will focus on the first category of anticipated change- for the individual.
- 3.3 During the first year of delivery, Breaking the Cycle catalyst projects have provided co-ordinated support from a lead practitioner that has benefitted 2,308 individuals. This includes 840 adults and 1,468 children and young people. Among the cohort there are:
- 141 first-time mothers (aged 18-19 years)
 - 21 women, who between them, have previously had 60 children removed from their care
 - 291 individuals seeking support for a combination of substance misuse, alcohol misuse, and mental health issues
 - 83 perpetrators of domestic abuse
 - 196 young people (aged 16-24) who are not in education, employment or training
 - 18 male survivors of domestic abuse with parenting responsibilities

- 304 female survivors of domestic abuse with parenting responsibilities

3.4 A wide range of positive outcomes are being achieved by the cohort, which are reported by individual projects. Some key headlines for catalyst projects are as follows:

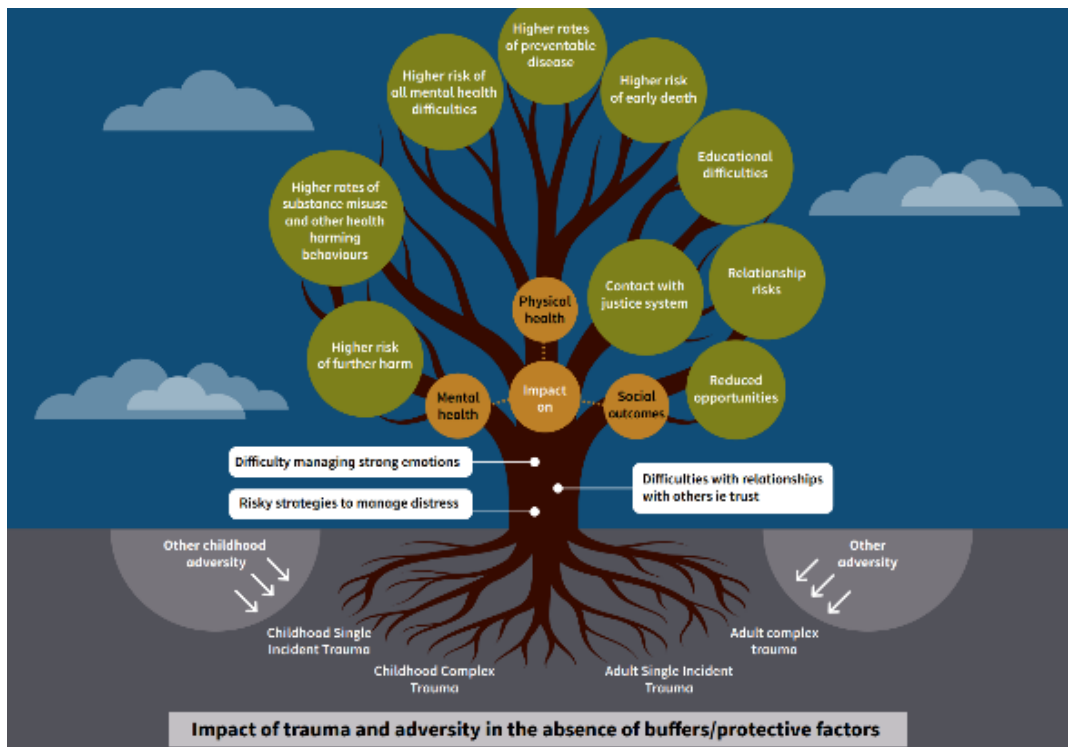
- The Drive project, which works with high-risk, high-harm perpetrators of domestic abuse has recorded an 84% reduction in physical abuse, an 100% reduction in sexual abuse, an 85% reduction in harassment and stalking, and an 82% reduction in jealous and coercive behaviours.
- The Pause programme, which works with women who have previously had children removed from their care, has engaged onto programme 21 women, none of whom have had further pregnancies/removals.
- Cradle to Career in North Birkenhead is achieving a significantly higher social care stepdown rate and case closure rate than the Wirral average, with referrals to Children's Services dropping significantly. The Bidston St. James ward, which has topped the rankings for highest number of referrals to Children's Services for several years, is in November 2022 ranked fourth.
- For the infants supported by the Family Nurse Partnership, 93.1% of the cohort, by age 2 years, met age-appropriate outcomes using a validated tool for social emotional development and 92.3% met developmental milestones in all areas.
- 112 young people accessing employability support have secured an EET (education, employment or training) outcome.

For persons facing multiple disadvantage, where intergenerational issues affect parents and are likely to impact on their children, these are indicators of significant change, with cycle-breaking potential.

3.5 Whilst delivering the catalyst projects considerable efforts have been taken to understand the key factors in achieving long-lasting, sustainable change. Learning has been underpinned by research and the growing body of evidence relating to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). ACEs are "highly stressful, and potentially traumatic events or experiences that occur during childhood and/or adolescence. They can be a single event or prolonged threats to, or breaches of, the young person's safety, security, trust or bodily integrity." (Young Minds, 2018). ACEs include the following:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual Abuse
- Emotional Abuse
- Living with someone who abused drugs
- Living with someone who abused alcohol
- Exposure to domestic violence
- Living with someone who has gone to prison
- Living with someone with serious mental illness
- Losing a parent through divorce, death or abandonment

- 3.6 Experiencing ACEs can have an impact on our future physical and mental health, and often ACEs can be barriers to healthy relationships. The following diagram, taken from Transforming Psychological Trauma Scotland, illustrates the extent to which ACEs can impact on an individual.



- 3.7 For many people who have experienced ACEs their need for support is increased, yet their experience can often make them more likely not to engage or to avoid contact with professionals and services. Research such as that undertaken by Transforming Psychological Trauma Scotland, identifies key transformational elements including trusted relationships, choice, and involving experts by experience.
- 3.8 The notion of involving ‘experts by experience’ is particularly relevant to learning emerging from the We Can Talk About Domestic Abuse project. This pilot project was funded by What Works for Children’s Social Care to test an approach for improving the experience of social care processes for those parents and children affected by domestic abuse so that they feel believed, supported, and empowered, whilst being appropriately safeguarded. The pilot was evaluated by the Policy Evaluation and Research Unit based at Manchester Metropolitan University. The evaluation considered evidence of feasibility, evidence of promise and readiness for trial. The full evaluation report can be accessed at <https://whatworks-csc.org.uk/research-report/we-can-talk-about-domestic-abuse/>
- 3.9 The project, which was delivered over a 15-month period, introduced 2 new roles to child protection services, that of Domestic Abuse Practice Professionals (DAPP), who were qualified social workers with specialism in domestic abuse, and Domestic Abuse Family Advocates (DAFA) who were workers with lived experience in domestic abuse and/or child protection

processes. While both roles were found to add value to the existing child protection system, it was the DAFA role which was considered the most valuable. The Policy Evaluation and Research Unit's report states:

“Overall, the WCTADA [We Can Talk About Domestic Abuse] Theory of Change appears plausible. Evidence suggests that some of its elements and pathways are more important than others. This is the case for DAFAs [Domestic Abuse Family Advocates], mentioned as the most important element of the programme by several stakeholders, from the WCTADA team to survivors and external agencies.”

- 3.10 The evaluation report outlines the features of the Domestic Abuse Family Advocate role which makes the greatest difference:

“Interview findings show that the DAFA's role is to provide emotional support to survivors of domestic abuse, particularly during the conferences [child protection conferences]. They act as 'translators' between the families and social care services, drawing on their lived experience of domestic abuse. They help survivors articulate their questions, raise issues such as misinterpretation in reports, and make sure the families have an advocate supporting them through core group meetings or courts....They will explain to the survivors the processes associated with child protection cases and what is expected from them. The DAFA appears to become the first, and sometimes preferred, point of contact for the survivors.”

- 3.11 Views of people involved and associated with the We Can Talk About Domestic Abuse project reinforced the importance of the Domestic Abuse Family Advocate role:

“With [the DAFA] I felt really relaxed and at ease. Nothing like I did when I met the social worker because then I was very anxious, nervous. I just felt at ease, like the way that she spoke to me. She just made me feel better about the whole situation because obviously having social services involved in your life, because obviously, I've been a mum for nearly 12 years, and then suddenly, to have so many professionals involved, it's scary. It's just not a nice feeling and I think having [the DAFA] and speaking to her and basically just being able to pick up the phone now and ring her and ask for her advice, it's been a big help to me.” (Survivor)

“They have got staff there with lived experience and I think that's massive. And I do think that has a place and a role to play.” (External partner)

“What makes the difference in domestic abuse interventions? Sometimes, for the survivor, it's the relationship they have with the facilitator.” (Social Worker)

- 3.12 The Domestic Abuse Family Advocates were instrumental in supporting 73 cases step down from child protection processes through co-operative working with children's social care to achieve reduction in risk and measurable change. Many parents commented on how their experience of

child protection processes were improved because of the role played by the Domestic Abuse Family Advocate.

“Now with [the DAFA] and [social worker] this time round, it was literally, obvious [social worker] knew straight away she didn’t need to be there, so it was short-lived. And it felt like she [social worker] listened more, and I got more of a trust with her than I did all them years ago...it was completely, totally different this time.” (Survivor)

3.13 By employing people with lived experience of domestic abuse and/or child protection processes, the We Can Talk About Domestic Abuse project has helped to break cycles for those persons, who have now had the opportunity to use their life experience positively in gaining employment, learning and skills. The personal account of one Domestic Abuse Family Advocate is shared in Appendix 2 and illustrates how transformative the experience has been for her.

3.14 To better understand the concept of trusted relationships, participants from across the Breaking the Cycle programme were invited to join a storytelling project. Led by a professional storyteller, 50 individuals took part with prompts to enable learning about what works, including asking participants to explore the notion of ‘a bit more’ and ‘trusted relationships’. Key themes that emerged from the storytelling project, described by participants, were:

AGENCY: when individuals are encouraged to act independently (with guidance from their keyworker where required), their sense of self improves and self-reliance is enhanced

CREATIVITY: When trying to recover from self-destructive habitual behaviour, employing creative activities may provide hope and belief.

HONESTY: Many people prefer to be told the truth up front by service providers even if these truths are sometimes challenging to hear.

FLEXIBILITY: If key workers are able to adapt to service user specific, and sometimes challenging, circumstances and requirements, it helps the individual to feel valued and respected.

RELIABILITY: Consistency of people dealing with service users makes a big difference; high turnover of staff can demoralise and frustrate service users.

REALITY: Many people prefer to meet in real spaces as it helps to build relationships and put them on a more equal footing.

RELATABILITY: It motivates service users to be treated as an individual and not as a statistic or ‘case’.

These themes will be incorporated into Breaking the Cycle training for practitioners and have been shared with both the Steering Group and Operational Group, so that they may inform service delivery.

- 3.15 When asked to describe the most important qualities of a key worker, participants from the Breaking the Cycle programme listed: honest, clear, persistent, assertive, flexible, creative, authentic, and collaborative. A selection of poems are contained within Appendix 3, and the full package is due to be published shortly.
- 3.16 Learning about 'change for the individual' from the first year of the Breaking the Cycle programme will be used to inform service development across the Council's services for people and shared with the Partnership for Children, Young People and Education.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no specific financial implications arising from this report. Existing resources will be used differently as opposed to new resources being sought.
- 4.2 Over the course of the Breaking the Cycle programme, which will continue to April 2023, in the first instance, a total of £6.54m is being invested. This includes £682k invested by Wirral Council and £5.858m from other funding sources. Each programme has specific funding, contract management and oversight arrangements. The Breaking the Cycle Steering group has oversight of collective performance, but responsibility for delivery lies with the nominated project sponsors and Project Leads as detailed in Appendix 1 of the Breaking the Cycle Prospectus.
- 4.3 Funding for We Can Talk About Domestic Abuse from What Works for Children's Social Care ended in January 2022, however funding has been provided from the Domestic Abuse Act grant, enabling this to continue over the same duration as other Breaking the Cycle catalyst projects.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 The Breaking the Cycle programme seeks to improve co-ordination of resource without impacting on staffing, ICT or assets. It is intended that improved data and intelligence will lead to better understanding of need and of which interventions, and combination of interventions, will deliver the best outcomes for children, young people and families. An improved level of data maturity is being achieved within existing ICT capacity and resource.
- 6.2 It is noted that where co-location has been achieved for Breaking the Cycle projects, such as at the St. James Centre for Cradle to Career and the Lighthouse Centre for We Can Talk About Domestic Abuse, an enhanced level of collaboration between third sector organisations and public services is providing an enhanced offer to Wirral residents.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 Failing to deliver a co-ordinated approach to prevention programmes presents the risk of missed opportunity, both in terms of meaningfully tackling issues that lead to health inequalities and in optimising funding secured for the projects. The Breaking the Cycle programme is maximising current opportunity and providing an evidence base for future, long-term preventative approaches.
- 7.2 A risk management plan is in place for Breaking the Cycle and is included in the prospectus at Appendix 1.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 Over the months November 2020 to April 2021, considerable engagement has taken place to develop the Prevention Policy Statement, Prevention Framework and Breaking the Cycle Prospectus. Supported by an external agency, Peopletoo, activity included workshops, focus groups, one-to-one conversations, use of online surveys, and interactive message boards. Engagement took place across Council directorates, with partner agencies, third sector organisations, and with youth voice groups.
- 8.2 Each of the catalyst projects has its own arrangements for engagement with participants which are shared with the Breaking the Cycle Steering Group and Operational Group. In addition to this, a collective approach was taken for the Storytelling engagement work led by professional storyteller, Ali Harwood, involving 50 individuals and 36 storytelling sessions from July to October 2022. This activity produced 34 poems, with several shared in Appendix 3 .

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone.
- 9.2 It is recognised that a disproportionate number of people facing multiple disadvantage have protected characteristics of the nine groups protected under the Equality Act 2010. A full Equality Impact Assessment has been completed for the Breaking the Cycle programme.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are no environmental or climate implications arising from the delivery of the Breaking the Cycle programme. It has no impact on the emission of greenhouse gases.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 Many community organisations are significant stakeholders in the Breaking the Cycle programme. A key driver of the programme is to support local

residents in achieving stability, employment and mobility, which contributes to community wealth.

- 11.2 Fundamental to the Breaking the Cycle programme is the importance of community. It is recognised that individuals and families will be more likely to sustain positive outcomes if they are living, with a sense of belonging, in a community where support, friendship and advice are easily available. Where services are co-located with community organisations this is having a positive impact.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Breaking the Cycle Prospectus

Appendix 2 – Personal Account

Appendix 3 – collection of poetry

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Wirral Council's Prevention Policy Statement

Wirral Council's Prevention Framework

We Can Talk About Domestic Abuse Evaluation <https://whatworks-csc.org.uk/research-report/we-can-talk-about-domestic-abuse/>

Cradle to Career Annual Report <https://righttosucceed.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/C2C-Annual-Progress-Report-2021-2022.pdf>

Transforming Psychological Trauma Scotland

https://transformingpsychologicaltrauma.scot/media/bajbr1yp/nesd1334-national-trauma-training-programme-online-resources_updated2106.pdf

TERMS OF REFERENCE

This report is being considered by the Children, Young People and Education Committee in accordance with section a of its Terms of Reference:

(a) exercising management, oversight and delivery of services to children and young people in relation to their care, wellbeing, education or health, with the exception of any powers reserved to full Council.

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Children, Young People and Education Committee	October 2021