

## HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

Wednesday 21 December 2022

<b>REPORT TITLE:</b>	<b>EARLY YEARS UPDATE</b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>DIRECTOR OF CHILD, FAMILY AND EDUCATION</b>

### REPORT SUMMARY

This report provides the Health and Wellbeing Board with an update of Early Years partnership work relating to:

- Early Years Strategy
- First 1001 Days Programme
- Link to the Family Hubs initiative

The report links to the Health and Wellbeing Strategy Priority 3: Ensure the best start in life for all children and young people

The report details the organisational, structural and partnership activity undertaken over the previous 18 months.

The report and strategy are aligned to priorities of Wirral Council's Plan 2025:

- 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 happy, active, and healthy lives where people are supported, protected and inspired to live independently.

This matter affects residents across the borough.

This report does not relate to a key decision.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The Health and Wellbeing Board is requested to:

1. Note and endorse the progress made in integrated working across Early Childhood Services, Public Health and Wirral's voluntary, community and social enterprise sector (VCSE), including the Early Years Strategy and Family Hubs developments.
2. Agree to future updates on outcomes of the Early Years Strategy and Family Hubs.

## SUPPORTING INFORMATION

### 1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 Wirral Council and its partners are committed to working together with families and communities to achieve the very best start in life for children. It is a collective ambition that all children in Wirral are happy, healthy, and grow into confident, capable and resilient young adults.
- 1.2 Support from the Health and Wellbeing Board will strengthen partnership efforts to build and strengthen integrated working detailed in the Early Years Strategy, and demonstrated through the 1001 First Days programme, which provide the foundation for the development of the Family Hubs model in Wirral.

### 2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 No other options have been considered.

### 3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

#### 3.1 Early Years Strategy

- 3.1.1 In 2019, Wirral's early years partnership commenced work on an Early Years Strategy. Whilst completion and publication was delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the extended timescales have allowed for meaningful co-production with parents and families to take place and learning from recent experience to be incorporated.
- 3.1.2 It is acknowledged that the Covid-19 pandemic has meant that there is an increased number of families requesting and accessing early years support across the system, as well as an increased amount of settings and partners identifying additional support needed for young children, therefore the need to work together effectively as an early years system is imperative.
- 3.1.3 The strategy sets early years into both a local and national context, considering key learning from work such as *The Allen Review (2011)* and *Marmot Review (2010)*. Local performance information informs priorities as the strategy defines "*school readiness*" and communicates an early years vision for Wirral. Priority areas within the strategy include:
  - A Unique Child
  - Positive Relationships
  - Enabling Environments
  - Learning and Development

The strategy builds on existing strengths such as the "*Parenting Journey*" and existing partnerships. It includes an Outcomes Framework that contributes to both Wirral Plan objectives and the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

- 3.1.4 Wirral children's voices have been at the heart of the development of the strategy, understanding what they felt supported them, to be "*Ready to Learn, Ready for School, Ready for Life*". In addition to coproduction with parents, this has enabled partners to understand parent's wishes and needs when developing the strategy and empower them as their child's first educator.
- 3.1.5 The strategy aims to promote a shared responsibility of early years outcomes between parents, communities, educational settings, and shares the ways in which this can and will be done. An example of this is the pressing need for workforce retention and development in the early years sector.
- 3.1.6 The Early Years Strategy is being launched in December 2022. Thereafter an early year steering group will oversee delivery of the strategy, ensuring that all partners are working towards a common outcomes framework, with progress on these outcomes being reported to the Health and Wellbeing Board at regular intervals.
- 3.1.7 The development and profile of the Early Years strategy will support the local early help system to collaborate in providing help at the earliest point of life.

## **3.2 Wirral's First 1001 Days Programme**

The First 1001 Days include pregnancy and the first two years of a child's life. There is clear, compelling evidence that this is a significant and influential phase in a child's development. What happens during this period lays the foundation for every child's future health, wellbeing, learning and earnings potential. It sets the groundwork for children's developing emotional wellbeing, resilience and adaptability; the competencies they need to thrive.

- 3.2.1 In 2020, Koala North West (KNW) and Foundation Years Trust (FYT) approached Early Childhood Services and Wirral Community Health and Care NHS Foundation Trust (WCHCT) 0-19 Services 0 – 19 Services to collectively develop an application to the Dept of Health and Social Care (DH&SC) for funding to create Wirral's 1001 First Days programme, which would improve integration between services offered for families of children between 0 – 2 years, providing a seamless offer which families could easily navigate. This application was supported by the Director of Children's Services and the Director of Public Health. KNW, as the lead agency, and FYT were awarded the funding and the programme was jointly launched by all partners in April 2021.
- 3.2.2 Service delivery is focused in Wirral's five most disadvantaged wards and on the Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority communities. Services incorporate increased breastfeeding initiation (including antenatal advice); peri-natal mental health support, improved language and communication by age 2.5 and improved health outcomes.
- 3.2.3 Beyond the delivery of services, a key aspect of the programme is to embed systemic change across the early years sector, enhancing collaborative working to improve families' experience of support in the first two years of a child's life. All partners committed to this element of the programme, recognising that integrated services are a vital component of promoting the best start in life for all Wirral's children.

3.2.4 Data sharing arrangements between Early Childhood Services (ECS), KNW and FYT allows all families registering with the First 1001 Days programme to be collated centrally by KNW, which has enabled the partners to follow the families and understand which services they are accessing within the partnership. KNW and FYT are additionally sharing outcomes on families registered to First 1001 Days with their organisations, facilitating a more detailed illustration of the parents' journeys.

3.2.5 Impact of the programme in Year 1:

- 756 from the Boroughs most deprived wards and an additional 173 BAME families supported.
- An additional 1,116 families across the rest of Wirral accessed universal services for 0-2's from KNW & FYT
- Breastfeeding rates increased from 3% to 20% from baseline figures in the target wards.
- Various outcomes on perinatal mental health are collected through the Programme, with between 74% and 85% of parents reporting reduced isolation and stress, improved relationships with their infants and improved mental health.
- Strongly linked to school readiness, 71% of parents reported improvements in their child's early language development, 80% reported increased understanding of how their babies learn and 69% said they had opportunities to help their children develop (such as reading more together).
- During Year 1, the main focus on health outcomes was through preventative awareness raising and support on respiratory infections in infants and young children, which has led to the Little Lungs Parent Champion service offer across Wirral. Key health messages were also threaded through other programme streams.
- A strong peer volunteer support model across the service offer is increasing knowledge within the community around early childhood development and taps into parents' expertise.
- An external evaluator is contracted to assess the impact of the grant. The summary report attached as an Appendix captures the Year 1 evaluation.

3.2.6 The aim of achieving a more collaborative approach across the partnership is being driven by senior strategic management. Delivery teams now have increased understanding of each other's service offers: to date, 280 families were accessing services from more than one partner. Increased awareness of partners' services is helping parents to confidently access services beyond the organisation they 'land' with, which enhances the support the families receive. 90% of families reported that the First 1001 Days programme had increased their knowledge of the services available to them and how to access them.

More effective integrated working is being achieved through systematic collaboration, such as:

- Regular joint locality meetings, where support for specific families is discussed.

- Monthly operational management meetings, where joint programme planning takes place.
- Monthly strategic leadership meetings, where progress is reviewed, and collective strategy is developed.
- 1001 Days network, which includes regular email updates to 85 professionals across 25 organisations and network meetings attended by the same organisations.

3.2.7 FYT and KNW are part of the new Family Toolbox Alliance, grounding the First 1001 Days under the umbrella of Wirral's early help system.

3.2.8 DH&SC representative are scheduled to meet the First 1001 Days leadership team in December 2022 to learn more about the success of the programme.

### 3.3 **Link between First Days, Wirral's Early Years Strategy and Family Hubs.**

3.3.1 The vision for Family Hubs in Wirral is to **ensure access and inclusion, broaden and cement relationships and align and connect services.**

The learning from the First 1001 Days programme has provided a clear set of recommendations to help us build on the experience of the last 18 months to develop Wirral's Family Hub model. Combined with the objectives laid out in the Early Years Strategy, Wirral is in a strong position to develop its Family Hubs model, in contrast to areas that haven't brought together key partners within the early years system. The First 1001 Days programme will be transitioned into the Family Hubs' Start for Life agenda, enabling the sustainability of the programme in the long term (notwithstanding the points made in section 4.0 below).

3.3.2 The Family Hub model has six key areas of support for the Start for Life agenda, each of which is already embedded across the partnership. The sections below explain how they are delivered through the First 1001 Days programme. Families registered to the First 1001 Days programme can access each of these services and are able to get information about them from all partners within it.

3.3.4 **Parenting Support:** Our offer includes volunteer led in-home peer support for new parents from Koala NW, as well as a family worker, pre-birth and infant team offers which is both on a 1:1 basis and in groups within Children's Centres.

3.3.5 **Parent–infant relationships and perinatal mental health support:** The combined offer includes specialist support through the Perinatal and Infant Mental Health Service (PIMHS) and Video Interaction Guidance (VIG) along with volunteer support. Focusing on supporting those early relationships between parent and baby with an understanding that this can be difficult, particularly if parents are experiencing emotional or mental health problems. The offer includes weekly peer support from a PIMHS Volunteer matched to the family. We also offer the Womb to World programme for parents-to-be and the accredited Baby Incredible Years course. Baby yoga and baby massage are aimed at new parents to improve attachment. A Dad's Reflective Parenting Programme allows dads to talk about what to expect during the

first two years of their baby's life, and how best to manage difficult moments, and in turn this helps to improve relationships across the family.

- 3.3.6 **Early language and the Home Learning Environment (HLE):** We provide an evidence-based programme which specifically targets the HLE and school readiness by increasing parents' understanding of early learning and how to promote it through play and reading together. This is enhanced by one-to-one sessions for families that need additional support from professionals and volunteers. Programmes are available for families whose children are suspected of having language delays. The Imagination Library book gifting scheme ensures all babies born within the five wards are able to receive free books. We are additionally contracted to deliver the newly branded 'Start for Life' HLE campaign developed by DfE and DH&SC.
- 3.3.6 **Infant feeding:** We offer antenatal breastfeeding advice and clinics (with midwifery) as well as post-natal breastfeeding peer support. This is enhanced by a closed online support group for 24/7 support from staff, volunteers, and other mothers.
- 3.3.7 **Parent and Carer Panels:** Each Children's Centre has a locality advisory board, which is inclusive of parents, and we are in the process of planning for a structured coproduction approach which is to be coordinated between the Family Hub team and the Family Toolbox Alliance.
- 3.3.8 **Publishing the Start for Life offer:** The First 1001 Days programme has a joint offer published through the new Family Toolbox website, as well as being made available directly to parents and professionals in the First 1001 Days network. This is in addition to the service promotion completed by individual partners.

## 4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Funding secured from the DH&SC to establish the First 1001 Days programme is time-limited. The DH&SC is eager to see sustainability in local approaches following the end of funding. The funding has enabled delivery, collaborative working and provided the skills and knowledge to form the Family Hubs model. It should be noted that the Transformation Fund awarded to Wirral for developing Family Hubs is for workforce development and infrastructure and does not include any specific funding for voluntary, community and social enterprise sector. The Family Hubs Steering Group is exploring opportunities to second a part-time staff member from the Early Help Alliance into the Family Hubs delivery team.

## 5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.
- 5.2 The Children and Families Act 2014 sets out the statutory requirements and responsibilities for the local authority and partners in providing support and services

for children, young people and families. This legislation is underpinned by statutory guidance: Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018), which states that, “Local areas should have a comprehensive range of effective, evidence-based services in place to address assessed needs early.” The family hubs programme will support Wirral Council in meeting its statutory responsibilities to meet need early.

## **6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: ICT, STAFFING AND ASSETS**

- 6.1 Sustainability of programmes beyond the lifetime of the DH&SC funding is a significant resource implication for the voluntary organisations leading the First 1001 Days Programme, however as a now strong early years partnership we are confident that this work will become a key part of the Family Hubs agenda and is integral to the Early Help Alliance arrangements.
- 6.2 Funding for the Family Hubs programme will provide capacity to facilitate this transformation programme, with two fulltime Best Start for Life Co-ordinators and one fulltime Programme Manager. This resource will be managed within Children’s Services and will work alongside wider programmes such as Co-location Programme, Resilient Communities, Town Deal, and other linked initiatives.
- 6.3 The capital funding received through the Family Hubs grant will finance the anticipated costs to upgrade assets, ensuring that hubs (both physical and virtual) are accessible and inclusive.
- 6.4 Wirral is being supported by the National Family Hubs Network, Anna Freud Centre and has access to a Regional Family Hubs Advisor. Ecorys have been commissioned by the Department for Education to work with Wirral Council on the development of the Theory of Change model and ongoing evaluation.

## **7.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

- 7.1 Risk registers for both the Early Years Strategy and Family Hubs programme are in place and will be monitored by relevant steering groups.
- 7.2 Early years, as supported by extensive research and bodies of evidence, are crucial to long-term outcomes for people. The Early Years Strategy and work to achieve collaborative partnership services are fundamental to the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Children’s Services outcomes and Wirral Plan objectives.

## **8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION**

- 8.1 Engagement with parents, children and families is consistently sought in the Early Years Sector. With each Children’s Centre benefiting from an Advisory Board and parent volunteers, involvement in programmes of work is standard practice. KNW and FYT regularly consult with parents on the design and delivery of programmes and families’ feedback was sought when developing the 1001 First Days programme. ECS, FYT, KNW and other VCSE organisations collaborated on seeking parent input on the Early Years Strategy.

## **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. An Equality Impact Assessment has been produced for the Early Years Strategy.

## **10.0 ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 Being accredited to UNICEF's Baby Friendly Initiative, Wirral's Children's Centres and 0-19 Community NHS Trust are promoting, wherever possible, breastfeeding to parents. Breastfeeding can have a positive impact on climate as it significantly reduces carbon footprint.

## **11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 As detailed in this report, Wirral Council works with many community partners, supporting them to develop their capacity, secure external funding, and provide opportunity for volunteering and employment for local people. Lifelong learning is promoted through the Children's Centre Offer, working with families to increase social mobility. Each Children's Centre, through their Advisory Board, works at community-level to ensure that centres are responding to the needs of their local area, taking a strengths-based approach and promoting community wealth.

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## **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 – Early Years Strategy  
Appendix 2- First 1001 Days Year 1 Summary Report

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

EARLY YEARS AND HEALTH, Health and Wellbeing Board 9 February 2022

## **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

This report is being considered by the Health and Wellbeing in accordance with Section C of its Terms of Reference:

“(c) To provide a local governance structure for local planning and accountability of health and wellbeing related outcomes”