



CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 19 July 2023

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

REPORT SUMMARY

This report provides the Children, Young People and Education Committee with the second of three reports on the Breaking the Cycle programme, focused on change for professionals and services. 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 from the eight Breaking the Cycle projects, their impact, and shares the impact on professionals, their experience and what is working well 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/S

The Children, Young People and Education Committee is requested to:

1. Exercise oversight of the development of services for children and families and agree to receive a further findings report from the Breaking the Cycle programme.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1. REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 The Breaking the Cycle programme is a cross-Council, multi-agency programme which is producing valuable learning about the experiences of people facing multiple disadvantages and how well the local system responds to meeting current need and its planning to prevent future need. The Breaking the Cycle programme provides opportunity to test and learn which is informing 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. 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. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Breaking the Cycle programme launched in October 2021, has co-ordinated delivery of eight catalyst projects for people facing multiple disadvantages and living in the borough's most deprived wards. Programme delivery was endorsed by the Children, Young People and Education Committee in October 2021.
- 3.2 This report is the second in a series of three which considers impact and learning from the programme. The Breaking the Cycle prospectus detailed 'Ambition for Our People' in three categories:

Change for the Individual;
Change for Professionals and Services; and,
Change for Organisations and Systems.

The first report, considering changes for the individual was presented to the Children, Young People and Education Committee on 06 December 2022. This report focuses on change for professionals and services. Whilst there have been many reported successes across the eight catalyst projects, this report will focus on Cradle to Career and Pause, considering learning in greater detail.

- 3.3 The most significant learning emerging from the Breaking the Cycle programme is the value of integrated multi-agency approaches. This is evident in several of the individual projects and in analysis of how the eight catalyst projects have interacted with each other. Cradle to Career provides an excellent example of how a multi-disciplinary approach can improve experience for children, families, and professionals, having a positive impact on outcomes. Cradle to Career takes a cross-section of the early help system, bringing it together into a single team.
- 3.4 Since January 2019, the early help system in Wirral has developed into a layered system of family help. The layers are as follows:

- Child in Need – Children’s Social Care.
- Targeted Help – Family Matters, Youth Justice Services, Compass, Detached Youth Work, Domestic Abuse Services, Response, Creative Youth Development, Pre-BIT.
- Early Help – Children’s Centres, School Readiness, Play, Youth Work.
- Community-led earliest help – Early Help Alliance, Wirral Youth Collective, VCF sector, peer support.
- Self Help – The Family Toolbox, Zillo, Local Offer, MyChildCan, etc.

3.5 Provision for each layer of the family help system exists within the Cradle to Career team, with staff resource from Children’s Services, Department for Work and Pensions, DWP, Wirral Ways to Recovery, Involve Northwest, and 0-19 Healthy Child Programme. This has enabled practitioners to provide support which the Joint Targeted Area Inspection, JTAI, team identified as seamless and cohesive. The JTAI report noted the multi-disciplinary approach as positive:

“The ‘cradle to career’ service allows easy access to support across a wide range of multidisciplinary services. When children’s needs escalate to the point that they need a statutory social work intervention, early help workers continue working with them to help ensure continuity in the support that children and their families receive. This is a model that starts with a good understanding of the community’s needs and how best to engage them. The wide range of effective services are leading to improved outcomes for many children and families.”

3.6 Practitioners in the Cradle to Career team identify positives of multi-disciplinary working as including:

- Improved their understanding of the roles of others.
- Improved their own knowledge and skills through shared learning.
- More opportunities for reflective practice and reciprocal learning.
- Improved the timeliness of access to support for children and families.
- Reduced bureaucracy.
- Improved relationships with community groups and partner organisations.
- Wrap-around approach to supporting families.
- Staff feel responsible for the whole team’s outcomes, not just those on their own caseload.
- When levels of need change the experience of families is more likely to be consistent and planned, rather than a ‘stop-start’ or ‘handover’ to another worker.

3.7 The importance of enabling a timely and smooth transition when a case needs to step-up or step-down is vital. It is a point at which risk can change rapidly and engagement can be negatively impacted. The ability within the multi-disciplinary team to mitigate against these factors is captured within the practice study inspectors highlighted in the JTAI inspection report:

“Practice study: highly effective practice

Fifteen-year-old Sarah has been known to services since she was born. The relationship with, and support provided by, statutory services, has not been seen by

the family as helpful in making a positive difference. Sarah and her family were reluctant to work further with statutory agencies. The most recent involvement followed an allegation by Sarah of physical chastisement. The family agreed to receive advice and support provided by the 'cradle to career' service. Cradle to career is a multidisciplinary, community-based open access service. Sarah and her family quickly developed a strong and trusting relationship with their early help worker. This relationship was developed at their pace and in locations that were comfortable for them.

Although concerns for Sarah did escalate, and it was necessary for her to be 'stepped up' to statutory support for a period of time, the early help worker has remained involved as the trusted, consistent person with Sarah and her family. This relationship has been key in bringing about significant change and improvements for Sarah and in ensuring that she needed a statutory level of service for a shorter period of time than may otherwise have been necessary. The family trust the early help worker and feel well supported and listened to by her. The social worker oversaw and coordinated the plans for Sarah effectively, while the multidisciplinary team wrapped around the early help worker to ensure that she had the skills, expertise, and knowledge she needed to best respond to the family's needs. Concerns for Sarah have significantly reduced. She is now attending school and taking part in a number of community activities. She and her family regularly drop into the cradle to career centre and take part in community events."

- 3.8 In addition to the practice benefits identified, the multi-disciplinary approach in the Cradle to Career team is demonstrating impact on data. This includes a significant increase in the volume of early help activity taking place in the ward as relationships improve and there is growing trust from the community in services and significant reduction in demand for Children's Social Care services. The Year 2 evaluation report for Cradle to Career, produced by education charity, Right to Succeed, identifies a range of changing trends since the project was introduced. These include:
1. Compared to previous years, a child in North Birkenhead is less likely to be referred to social care and less likely to have their social care needs escalated.
 2. Compared to other areas of Wirral, a child in North Birkenhead is no longer more likely to be referred into social care.
 3. In the last 18 months, significantly fewer children have been escalated to Level 4 in North Birkenhead than in previous years and compared to Wirral wide figures.
 4. Compared to previous years, a child in North Birkenhead is more likely to be stepped down from a child protection plan, and less likely to come back into social care once their case has been closed.
 5. Compared to previous years, a child in North Birkenhead is now more likely to be engaged in level 3 support and more likely to have their case closed once supported.
- 3.9 How the Cradle to Career team works within a defined geographical area has provided valuable learning. At the outset of the project, the multi-disciplinary team were asked to work assertively for the 2,500 children and young people who live in the area rather than just those who are referred to children's services. In practice this

has meant having an overview of all children's ages, and their access to universal services. The Cradle to Career team have proactively worked to ensure that the take up of universal services, such as early years offer, engagement with youth and play activities, and access to employment support, is as high as possible. This approach seeks to ensure that children and families benefit from the universal offer, and those who may need additional support are identified early and given additional help. By considering the wider child population, the Cradle to Career team have enabled the significant increase in early help activity in the area, with numbers engaged more than doubling over an 18-month period. This is a truly preventative approach.

3.10 The concept of a team approach has been highlighted as key learning with Cradle to Career and with the Pause programme. Pause works with women who have had multiple children removed from their care, at a time when the women are not pregnant or caring for children. This 'pause' from parenting enables the women to focus on themselves, often for the first time in their lives. Pause offers an 18-month intensive model of support, tailored to the individual woman's needs and goals. It is predicated on assertive outreach and relationship-based practice.

3.11 Pause commenced working in Wirral in April 2021, as part of a Liverpool City Region approach. Sixteen women, who had had a total of 57 children removed from their care were enrolled on the first course, or 'community' as it is known. The community has had multiple successes including:

- 100% of participants completing the course.
- 93% of women report feeling as or more safe in their housing.
- 75% report improved mental health and wellbeing.
- 67% report having an improved ability to manage loss.
- 64% report having improved self-esteem.
- 50% have registered with a dentist.
- 97% have registered with a GP.
- There has been one child born within the cohort, who is in the care of the mother and supported positively through a child in need plan.

3.12 Participants on the Pause programme also note the importance of the team approach and how they benefit from that in terms of consistency and seamless support. In a recent case study, M, speaks about the team approach:

"When you're with Pause even though you've got your own worker ,you feel like you are part of team Pause in general. Your worker is your worker, and you know that they are always there to support you but in the event or the occasion that they can't and you've got a scary meeting or, I don't know, you really need to speak something through with someone, you know you can call anyone from Pause. They might not know your exact story, but you know that they are always on your team and that's the most important thing. So, the biggest thing for me is having somebody who is always on your team, that's not part of social services, entirely independent, and you feel like it's a safe place to be. So, team Pause is definitely like the way forward, it's the safe thing."

- 3.13 Learning from the Breaking the Cycle programme suggests that how team members interact significantly impacts on how much trust participants are willing to invest in their support plans. It is clear from both Cradle to Career and Pause that where teams present with mutual respect and trust they have high rates of success with participants.
- 3.14 Another interesting learning point relating to engagement, and the influence the team can have, is that where teams engage positively across the multi-agency partnership- with schools, settings, community organisations, and partners- the engagement of the family corresponds. Cross-agency collaboration has been a priority area for the Breaking the Cycle programmes. At both strategic and operational levels there are regular multi-agency meetings aiming to share learning, information, and outcomes. Projects are embedded in community bases and have strong, purposeful relationships with schools and settings. The positive relationships across agencies is benefitting participants and professionals.
- 3.15 The intention of the Breaking the Cycle programme was to test and learn from a range of different approaches which would inform future service delivery. Key learning points described in this report will be incorporated into future service delivery, with plans to scale up the multi-disciplinary team approach in the four locality areas. The Local Area's response to the Joint Targeted Area Inspection details plans to scale up the multi-disciplinary team approach within the four geographical areas of Wirral. This has been accepted by Ofsted as an appropriate response for next steps in the development of effective and consistent family help.

4. 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 August 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. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

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

6. 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. 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. 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.

9. 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 disadvantages 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 and can be found via the following link:

<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/equality-impact-assessments>

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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BACKGROUND PAPERS

Wirral Council's Prevention Policy Statement
Wirral Council's Prevention Framework
Breaking the Cycle Prospectus

<http://democracy.wirral.gov.uk/documents/g9548/Public%20reports%20pack%2006th-Dec-2022%2018.00%20Children%20Young%20People%20Education%20Committee.pdf?T=10>

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:

1. 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	December 2022
Children, Young People and Education Committee	October 2021