



Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2)

Time and Date

10.00 am on Thursday, 11th March, 2021

Place

This meeting will be held remotely. The meeting can be viewed live by posting this link into your browser

<https://youtu.be/Vverr9T7LPs>

Public Business

1. **Apologies and Substitutions**
2. **Declarations of Interests**
3. **Minutes** (Pages 3 - 10)
 - a) To agree the minutes of the meeting held on 28th January, 2021
 - b) Matters Arising
4. **Children's Services Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic - Vulnerability and Disadvantage** (Pages 11 - 18)

Briefing Note of the Director of Children's Services
5. **Children's Services Continuous Improvement Progress** (Pages 19 - 22)

Briefing Note of the Director of Children's Services
6. **Strengthening Families - Family Valued Programme** (Pages 23 - 32)

Report of the Director of Children's Services
7. **Work Programme** (Pages 33 - 36)

Briefing Note of the Scrutiny Co-ordinator
8. **Any Other Business**

Any other items of business which the Chair decides to take as matters of urgency because of the special circumstances involved.

Private Business

Nil

Julie Newman, Director of Law and Governance, Council House Coventry

Wednesday, 3 March 2021

Notes: 1) The person to contact about the agenda and documents for this meeting is Michelle Rose, Governance Services, Council House, Coventry, telephone 024 76 972645, alternatively information about this meeting can be obtained from the following web link: <http://moderngov.coventry.gov.uk>

2) Council Members who are not able to attend the meeting should notify Michelle Rose as soon as possible and no later than 9.00 a.m. on 11th March, 2021 giving their reasons for absence and the name of the Council Member (if any) who will be attending the meeting as their substitute.

3) Scrutiny Board Members who have an interest in any report to this meeting, but who are not Members of this Scrutiny Board, have been invited to notify the Chair by 12 noon on the day before the meeting that they wish to speak on a particular item. The Member must indicate to the Chair their reason for wishing to speak and the issue(s) they wish to raise.

Membership: Councillors P Akhtar, J Blundell, B Gittins (By Invitation), S Hanson (Co-opted Member), K Jones (By Invitation), B Kaur, L Kelly, J Lepoidevin, G Lloyd, K Maton (By Invitation), K Sandhu (Chair), P Seaman (By Invitation), R Thay and C Thomas

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Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2)
held at 11.00 am on Thursday, 28 January 2021

Present:

Members: Councillor K Sandhu (Chair)
Councillor P Akhtar
Councillor J Blundell
Councillor J Lepoidevin
Councillor G Lloyd
Councillor R Thay
Councillor C Thomas

Co-opted Members: Mrs S Hanson and Mrs K Jones

Cabinet Member: Councillor K Maton Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

Employees:

A Coles, Education and Skills
J Gregg, Director of Childrens Services
G Holmes, Law and Governance
K Nelson, Director of Education and Skills
M Rose, Law and Governance
R Sugars, Education and Skills

By Invitation: P Green Head Teacher

Apologies: Councillor B Gittins, B Kaur and P Seaman

Public Business

13. Declarations of Interests

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests.

14. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 3rd December, 2020 were agreed as a true record. There were no matters arising.

15. The Impact of Covid-19 on Schools

The Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) received a presentation of the Director of Education and Skills that informed Members of the Impact of Covid-19 on Schools.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills and the Director of Education and Skills began by thanking all staff, and parents and carers working with young

people during this difficult time. A reassurance was given that parents were not expected to be school teachers but working together with schools to keep young people motivated was beneficial for all.

The presentation detailed the following:

- The current position
- The COVID-19 Journey
- Partnership principals
- The positives including, the joined-up approach and Local Authority support
- The Challenges

Also present was Head Teacher Paul Green, who had been invited to the meeting by the Chair, Councillor Sandhu to support the discussions. Mr Green emphasised that he had experienced the strength of the Coventry Partnership collaboration and supportive schools' network which had been valuable through this new experience. Mr Green was keen to ensure that some positives were maintained in schools in the future, such as increased confidence with using technology, other 'Covid keeps' were being investigated.

It was also recognised that Coventry had been commended by the DfE for providing a collective voice. The business case for vaccinations of staff in special schools to support high risk situations had also been valuable.

Challenges discussed included:

- Frequent changes to guidance at short notice
- Gaps in learning
- The safety of vulnerable pupils
- Balancing risks to public health and loss of education
- Staff were managing onsite learning, remote learning, track and trace, lateral flow tests and new examination processes
- Ofsted assessments
- Financial impacts
- Electronic devices and internet access

The Board also thanked staff on behalf of the citizens of Coventry, for their enthusiasm, commitment and hard work and were pleased that despite the web of complexities there had been benefits identified in this very difficult time which could support young people in their futures.

The Board questioned officers, received responses, and discussed the following issues:

- Contact with vulnerable children and families
- Home learning on laptops and internet access
- Covid funding and catch-up support for gaps in learning
- Tests
- Signs of safety
- Parental anxiety about home schooling
- Mental health support in schools

Officers noted that it was a choice offered to families of vulnerable children to attend school, contact had been made with identified families as directed by

national guidance. Technology and internet access had been a significant challenge and creative thinking had been encouraged including, sharing information with parents about access through devices they may have other than laptops such as games consoles. Also blended learning i.e. some 'live' lessons and some independent directed work set to support families with multiple siblings and one device. Opportunities for supporting catching up needed to be explored once gaps had been identified. Signs of safety were not as evident to staff as when schools were open fully and there had been evidence of hidden harm following schools opening back up during the Covid journey and opening back up following a full lockdown. Parents were urged to contact schools if they felt anxious at all about home schooling and officers again thanked parents for working in partnership with schools and encouraging young people to engage in learning during this difficult time.

Officers agreed to look into whether recorded lessons could be transferred to DVD to increase access for those without internet connection. Officers also agreed to circulate further information to the Scrutiny Board about how many vulnerable children were in schools.

RESOLVED that, The Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) noted the detailed presentation which updated members on the Impact of Covid-19 on Schools and requested that a letter be sent on behalf of the Board to thank all staff for their hard work and commitment particularly during this challenging time.

16. **Children's Services Continuous Improvement Progress and Covid Update**

Further to minute 34/19 the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) received a Briefing note of the Director of Children's Services that presented the progress with Children's Services improvement, which had been reported to the Continuous Improvement Executive Group on 9 December 2020. The briefing note also provided an interim update to the Board on the impact of Covid on vulnerable children and families. The next Continuous Improvement Executive Group would be held on 10 February 2021.

The briefing note indicated that the Ofsted Annual Conversation with regional representatives was undertaken each year, the meeting last year took place in March 2020. The meeting was part of a broader meeting covering education and early years. In March 2020, Ofsted paused ILACS inspections due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Children's Services was anticipating a standard Inspection by September 2020. Ofsted published their interim plans for a phased return to routine inspections which commenced from September 2020. The Interim visits were paused again during the November 2020 lockdown.

A report proposing arrangements to transfer Children's Services Continuous Improvement to Coventry Safeguarding Children's Partnership was approved by the Children's Services Continuous Improvement Executive Group on 28th October 2020. The new arrangements would be effective from 1st April 2021, the governance in place would ensure that Children's Services continuous improvement remained a political priority. Education and Children's Scrutiny

Board members would continue to receive reports on Children's Services continuous improvement and progress on a quarterly basis.

On 5 January 2021 a further national lockdown was announced. Ofsted had confirmed that interim focused visits would be undertaken during the national lockdown period commencing from February 2021, changes would be made to make the process more manageable and proportionate.

The Continuous Improvement Plan was reviewed by Executive Group Board members on 9 December 2020. The plan had been updated to reflect current progress and had received critical challenge from the Independent Chair on the impact of actions. The completion of actions in the plan would be signed off by the Continuous Improvement Executive Group on 10th February 2021, before arrangements transferred to the Coventry Safeguarding Children's Partnership on 1st April 2021.

Children's Services continued to maintain core service delivery, delivering ongoing protection, support and intervention to vulnerable families across Coventry during the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic. All buildings had remained open, services had continued to operate during the November 2020 national lockdown period, risk assessments were regularly updated to reflect the changes in government guidance and were disseminated to staff. Virtual visits had continued throughout the service where it was safe to do so. Children's Homes had continued to operate within the operating risk assessment. Broad Park House had remained open offering short breaks both targeted and community breaks. Staff who could work effectively from home had continued to be based at home. The service continued to be under pressure with the increased numbers of child in need work, increased numbers of Child Protection work and LAC numbers increasing. Caseloads were higher than average and recruiting to experienced social worker vacancies remained a significant challenge.

The recruitment and retention of experienced frontline Children and Families Social Workers was a challenge facing all local authorities across the country. The most recent DFE Social Workforce Data indicated (2019) that there was an acute shortage of Experienced Children and Families Social Workers particularly those who were three years post qualified. The operating environment for the recruitment of experienced social workers had become increasingly challenging since the pandemic.

The Children's Services Workforce Development Strategy supported and improved the recruitment and retention of social workers, and children's services practitioners by developing the training and development offer, focusing on improving the capability of staff to engage children, young people and families by enabling them to assess, make judgements, decisions and 'hold risk' whilst creating solutions with families and multi-agency partners. The strategy had delivered a number of key initiatives:

- A number of Recruitment Campaigns to promote Coventry City Council Children's Services as a first-choice destination for Social Workers to practice.
- A successful Coventry Social Work Academy has seen 58 Newly Qualified Social Workers commencing the Academy since July 2018.

- A revised Children's Services Social Work Progression and Career Pathway Framework
- A Children's Services 'Grow our own Social Work Scheme' and National Fast Track Pre-Qualifying Social Work Programmes; Step Up and Frontline programme.
- The service has supported the 'Social Work Together' government campaign supporting the current COVID-19 pandemic enabling social workers who have retired in the last two years to be fast tracked to apply to return to practice.
- A return to practice scheme to enable Children and Families Social Workers to return to the profession.
- A comprehensive learning and development offer that is fit for purpose and supports practitioners to continuously improve the services provided to children and young people and their families, that improves the quality and consistency of practice.
- The launch of a 'refer a friend' scheme in March 2020 has resulted in a further 3 experienced social workers joining the service.
- Regular engagement with agency staff to consider applying for vacancies within the service has resulted in a number of agency social workers being appointed to permanent experienced social worker roles.
- Children's Services launched their own local Induction in October 2020 to support the corporate Induction.

The service had been under significant pressure, the current market and demand for social workers continued to increase due to the pandemic which had increased the competition for recruiting within the region. The number of social work vacancies remained high, and despite a range of recruitment initiatives and other approaches, the service continued to interview small numbers of candidates on a weekly basis and those successful were offered experienced social worker roles.

The COVID-19 pandemic was having significant impact on recruitment and was making it difficult to recruit experienced social workers during this period. This had led to an increased use of agency staff and increased financial impact. The service had also experienced difficulty in recruiting agency social workers due to insufficient experienced social workers in the region. A shortage of social workers had led to higher caseloads and higher demand of work across all services and teams in Children's Services.

A further 12 Newly Qualified Social Workers (Cohort 7) would commence on 25 January 2021, this was an additional cohort to address further the number of social work vacancies within the service. A further Social Work Academy Team to manage the double cohorts of Newly Qualified Social Workers would also be established and recruited to.

Children's Services continued to work with the recruitment team and human resource colleagues to review further targeted campaigns and innovative ways to recruit and retain experienced social workers.

The Performance Board continued to meet monthly to review performance. A summary of current performance showed there continued to be an increase in performance activity, the increase in demand was putting significant pressure on services.

- Increase in Referrals in the last seven months (613 compared with 279 in April 2020)
- Contacts in the last seven months (2,392 compared with 1582 April 2020)
- Number of children subject to a child protection plan have increased to 462 compared with 408 in April 2020
- S47's has increased considerably 307 in October 2020 compared with 110 in April 2020.
- The number of children identified as "Children in Need" continue to rise 2010 compared with 1225 in April 2020
- Looked after children continue to increase 756 compared with 693 in April.
- Assessments completed within 45 days have decreased to 78.3% compared with 85.9% in April 2020.

Children's Services introduced Quality Assurance visits to teams in October 2019. The aim was to ensure understanding of practice and the signs of safety framework to ensure a clearer line of sight of the senior leadership team to frontline practitioners. The visits included direct observations, discussions with staff, and case mapping.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, visits had not been undertaken during March-September 2020. In October 2020 the third visit was held in the MASH, this was face to face whilst complying with COVID-19 guidance with some of the visit completed remotely. The findings from the visit highlighted positive outcomes with evidence demonstrating improvement and focus on maintaining continuous improvement.

It remained a very challenging operating environment. In the lead up to the Ofsted Interim Focused visit the Children's senior leadership team and extended Leadership Team continued to work together to drive forward practice improvements and service changes. This phase of significant demand and improvement relied heavily on corporate support and the support from partners to ensure that improvement continued. There was explicit intention to ensure that Children's Services reached a position where it was continuously achieving good outcomes for the Children of Coventry.

The Board questioned officers, received responses, and discussed the following issues:

- Administrative support for Social Workers
- The workload of Social Workers
- Risk Assessments
- Extra pressure and procedures due to Covid
- Impact on performance
- Children with a Children In Need assessment and parental engagement

Officers noted that Covid had altered the workflow of the Service, young people were brought to their attention later and needed escalating quicker once hidden harm had been identified. Roles had been risk assessed and redefined. Agency availability was reduced, and workloads were exceeding what was considered manageable, additional funding was required.

Officers agreed to provide the Board with information on the number of parents not engaged with the service following Children in Need assessments.

RESOLVED that, the Board noted the update on the Continuous Improvement Progress and Covid-19 Update and requested that a letter be sent on behalf of the Board to thank all staff for their hard work and commitment particularly during this challenging time.

17. **Work Programme**

The Board considered their work programme for the current municipal year. It was noted that Items had been paused due to the pandemic to allow Directors to manage requirements of their statutory duties having regard for new regulations and not create additional pressures during this challenging time. There would be a meeting of the Health Scrutiny Board that this Board would be invited to attend on 24th March, 2021.

18. **Any Other Business**

There were no other items of public business.

(Meeting closed at 12.50 pm)

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Coventry City Council

Briefing note

To: Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2)

11 March 2021

Subject: Children's Services Impact of COVID-19 pandemic – Vulnerability and Disadvantage

1 Purpose of the Note

- 1.1 To inform the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) and provide a progress update of the current situation and impact of COVID-19 pandemic on Children's Services and partners since October 2020.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Education and Children's Scrutiny Board (2) are recommended to:
- 1) To note the current situation, progress and impact of COVID-19 pandemic on Children's Services and partners
 - 2) Identify any areas the Board may want to consider in more detail at a future meeting
 - 3) Identify any further recommendations for the appropriate Cabinet Member

3 Information/Background

- 3.1 Children's Services has continued to deliver protection, support and intervention to vulnerable families across Coventry, whilst maintaining critical services throughout the challenge of the Covid-19 pandemic. The critical elements of the service involved the immediate protection of children who were brought to the attention of Children's Services including: MASH; The Emergency Duty Team (EDT); Section 47 Child Protection (CP) enquiries; Section 17 support to Children in need (CiN); Children and Families Assessments; any other type of assessment of need.
- 3.2 The ongoing protection and support of children has also continued during this period and included: children who received an early help offer to prevent them requiring statutory intervention, Open CiN cases, open CP cases, open Looked After Children (LAC), open care leavers. Children's Services continued as far as possible to provide the same range of provision to children and families in Coventry, albeit scaled back and delivered in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 3.3 As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown, Children's Services scaled back: routine contract management and commissioning activity; face to face contact; large gatherings; face to face group work; certain statutory visits to children where these had been risk assessed and signed off by a manager and where IT systems were used as an alternative.
- 3.4 Children's Services depends on a system of partners across the city to enable the delivery of a safe and efficient service. Partners continued to work with the service throughout this

period: Section 47 enquiries with the police; health as a safeguarding partner; foster carers; third party providers of looked after children placements; and schools.

- 3.5 Where services temporarily ceased, there was increased pressure on families/carers, wherever possible alternative support was offered. The vast majority of Children's Services continued to operate albeit in a different way.
- 3.6 Four Family Hubs and the area social work offices closed. This enabled staff to be supported to work from home and continue to ensure children were safeguarded. Four Hubs remained open which continued to provide an Early Help Offer to families and were open for a 'Here to Help' function so families could access face to face support at a time of crisis.
- 3.7 All buildings re-opened during the summer and have continued to remain open during the November lockdown and the current lockdown. All Family Hubs and Area Teams; Broadgate House; Children's Homes are COVID-19 compliant and have risk assessments in place for each building with protective measures to mitigate COVID-19 risks. These are regularly updated and shared with trade union colleagues and staff.
- 3.8 A service expectations document has been developed and shared with trade union colleagues to outline the minimum staffing expectations and service needs. The document was reviewed further in January 2021 to take account of the national lockdown position. Skeleton staffing arrangements are currently in place based on a rota and bubble teams formed to ensure the statutory functions are effectively carried out.
- 3.9 The consequence of a '*perfect storm*' has led to increased levels of risk across the children's partnership. Fewer members of staff, parental stress, reduced availability, children seen less often, less reliance on partners and greater partial closures of schools have all contributed to operating with a greater level of risk in the system.

4 Impact of Covid-19 on Children's Services

- 4.1 The overall volume of statutory work reduced at the beginning of the pandemic, in April 2020 there were 25% fewer referrals than in April 2019. In normal circumstances this might be a positive indicator of confidence in the safeguarding system. However, as the reduction in referrals can be linked to the national lockdown and reduction in public services across the board including education, the voluntary sector and drug services, this is not the case. Access to children and families was greatly reduced during this period.
- 4.2 April 2020 highlighted a marked drop in referrals. Children's Services received 1582 contacts of which 279 were accepted as referrals (compared with April 2019, 2110 contacts and 448 referrals were received). Schools are consistently the highest referring agency. During March 2020, school referrals reduced following school closures. Covid-19 school closures and the reduction in other services contributed to increased levels of hidden harm within the system.
- 4.3 Contacts and referrals peaked in September /October 2020. In October 2020, the service received 2441 contacts of which of which 615 were accepted as referrals. This compares to 2080 contacts received in January 2021 of which 341 were accepted as referrals. The reduction in referrals is a result of current school closures and there is likely to be a further impact when schools re-open, which is predicted to be in early March 2021.
- 4.4 Domestic abuse is one of Coventry's highest reasons for referral. The reduction in overall MASH referrals was therefore a concern because it indicated hidden need and potential risk, particularly as other support services within the community supporting domestic abuse ceased or reduced, for example, the Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Programs, or Domestic Abuse Victim Support groups.
- 4.5 Agencies have continued to work together within the Covid-19 constraints. Schools across the city identified children that they deemed to be vulnerable and put monitoring systems in place, proportional to the risk. Strategies included daily 'phone calls, door-step visits and

escalation to the police and Children's Services for safe and well checks. However, 'lockdown' reduced visibility of vulnerable children and therefore increased inherent risk.

- 4.6 Where the risks to children required escalation to court proceedings court slots were reduced and courts worked virtually. Solicitors had limited availability to support parents and there was an increase in adjournments.
- 4.7 During the current national lockdown all looked after children have been encouraged to attend school where possible. Coventry Virtual School has continued to offer support and guidance to the schools which were primarily responsible for the safeguarding of the looked after pupils which they had on their school roll during the 'lockdown' period.
- 4.8 Coventry Virtual School also constructed an 'at risk register' where each individual student's risk level was assessed; in collaboration with external agencies. Each level of risk was supported by an agreed level of contact and monitoring; with a personalised monitoring plan evolving for the most vulnerable students during the pandemic. This risk register was updated daily in order to ensure that students in need of further support and monitoring were clearly identified.
- 4.9 Following the suspension of the formal registration of pupils at their registered schools, the Virtual School established an interim measure to record the pupils' school attendance. This involved working with colleagues in fostering, social workers and a wide range of foster carers. A simple process was developed for colleagues to record if pupils were attending education provision during the suspension of usual education provision. A 'RAG' rating exercise was conducted based on the level of vulnerability of the young people which directed the frequency of contact with these young person's carers or school.
- 4.10 The management of the Virtual School have been an active participant with a wide range of regional and national conversations via webinars with their colleagues from Virtual Schools from across the country. This has meant that Coventry Virtual School are contributing in the national conversations for supporting some of the country's most vulnerable individuals.
- 4.11 Children's Services' practitioners have continued to undertake face to face home visits where families were assessed as high risk or to prevent a situation from escalating during the national lockdown position. Early help support is generally delivered virtually by phone or video call with the Family Hubs offering a Here to Help function only and staffed by bubble teams of 3 staff.
- 4.12 The service continued to work hard to safeguard the children open to Children's Services, but the amount of hidden harm significantly increased. This is a concern in the current national lockdown which will see hidden harm significantly increased further as Schools re-open once again in March 2021.
- 4.13 Where children needed to be removed from home, there was a shortage of placements, locally, regionally and nationally. This became more acute and impacted on the costs of placements. This had a significant impact on securing safe provision for children to move to.
- 4.14 Overall, services were concerned that the increased pressure on the system would result in an increased risk that some children and young people would not be safeguarded because they fell through an unavoidable gap during this Covid-19 pandemic. Services have continued to remain committed to ensure children and families in Coventry are safeguarded as far as is possible.

5 Coventry Safeguarding Children's Partnership response to COVID-19

- 5.1 The Chair of the Coventry Safeguarding Children Partnership confirmed that safeguarding of children in Coventry remained a priority, as services worked through the changes brought about by coronavirus. Working practices continued to evolve to meet the needs of the most vulnerable in our communities.

- 5.2 The Board reassessed planned activity and adopted a pragmatic approach, to what was feasible as services adapted to new working arrangements. The Board reinforced that Coventry's commitment to provide help and support where needed, is as strong as ever and that working together has never been more important.
- 5.3 The Local Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) team have continued to produce position statements outlining the position across the Children's Partnership.

6 Impact of COVID-19 on the Workforce

- 6.1 The Council have experienced a significant number of staff self-isolating because of Covid-19. Initially, the number of staff infected increased, leading to significant capacity issues that impacted on the Council's ability to effectively respond to all safeguarding issues. Good agency staff were in short supply and did not compensate for service pressures, the negative impact on frontline staff therefore increased.
- 6.2 The recruitment and retention of experienced frontline Children and Families Social Workers continues to be a challenge. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to have a significant impact on recruitment and is making it difficult to recruit experienced social workers during this period. This has led to an increased use of agency staff and increased financial impact.
- 6.3 Children's Services continued to ensure that the recruitment of social workers remained a key priority, this included being part of the DfE initiative focused on the returning to practice recruitment campaign *Social Work Together*. The campaign launched by Social Work England and LGA aimed to bring social workers who have retired in the last two years back into practice to support the local response to coronavirus Covid-19. Coventry's Return to Practice (RTP) Programme relaunched in December 2020, six successful candidates have been offered a shadowing opportunity to update their practice in a specific team and ultimately be offered a permanent opportunity to practice as a Children's Social Worker in Coventry.
- 6.4 Children's Service has successfully appointed an additional cohort of 9 Newly Qualified Social Workers (Cohort 7) who commenced on 25th January 2021. The Social Work Academy will manage a staggered cohort of NQSW's with an additional team to reduce the number of vacancies.
- 6.5 The service continues to have a robust recruitment process that specifically targets recruiting experienced children and family's social workers via a range of social media platforms, recruitment campaigns and other innovative approaches. Recruitment interviews have continued during this period virtually via Microsoft Teams. However, with demand increasing, and a high level of social worker vacancies and agency costs increasing, the service are under significant pressure.

7 Impact of COVID-19 - Performance

- 7.1 The table overleaf provides a comparison of current performance compared with December 2019, prior to COVID-19 and the impact since April 2020 to the current date. The table highlights significant increases for children on a Child Protection Plan, Looked After Children and Child in need throughout the year, although current performance data in January 2021 is starting to see a decrease in numbers. However, the reliance on agency staffing continues to increase due to the high levels of social work vacancies.

Comparison of Performance December 2019 – January 2021

	December 2019	April 2020	June 2020	August 2020	October 2020	December 2020	January 2021
Child Protection Plans	341	408	410	412	457	449	441
Looked After Children	691	693	703	735	757	760	753
Child in Need	1,684	1,225	1,508	1,733	2,010	1,901	1,773
Child and Family assessments	372	516	296	414	475	510	454
Contacts received	1,778	1,582	2,127	1,805	2,441	2,468	2080
Agency Staff	30	36	48	56	57	60	66

7.2 The number of Open Early Help has stabilised after increasing month on month since March 2020 and is now back to the level before COVID-19 lockdown. The numbers have stayed very similar for the last three months.

7.3 Overall performance activity is highlighting a reduction in January 2021 compared to previous months:

- The number of referrals has been reducing month by month since a peak of **665** in September to **341** in January 2021. This is the lowest number since the original lockdown in April 2020.
- The number of contacts has reduced by 16%, from **2468** in December to **2080** in January 2021. Contacts have stayed very similar between October and December 2020.
- Number of children subject to a child protection plan has continued to increase during the year and peaked at **457** in October 2020, this has started to reduce in the last two months and is currently **441**, this is still higher than 408 in April 2020.
- Completed S47's, reduced by 37% from **206** in December 2020 to **130** in January 2021, which is the lowest number since 99 in May 2020.
- Children in Need has reduced month on month since a peak of **2010** in October 2020 to **1773** in January 2021.
- Looked after children has seen a reduction from **760** in December 2020 to **753** in January 2021, although this is still the third highest number in the last 12 months.
- Assessments completed within 45 days reduced by 11% from **510** in December 2020 to **454** in January 2021, which is the lowest number since August 2020 (414).

8 Reset and Recovery

8.1 Children's Services have experienced a number of challenges as well as a number of positives and advantages to working in a different way, which will influence how the service work differently in the future.

- 8.2 **Challenges** continue to be seen with: undertaking assessments or effective monitoring virtually (difficult to know if seeing a true picture); there are some challenges in communicating virtually particularly with young children or those with disabilities; managing and supporting staff is more difficult remotely in terms of providing support e.g. to new staff members, or emotional support and monitoring performance; greater risk of 'hidden harm' not being identified (reduced referrals from partners and school closures); impact on capacity either due to sickness/absence or due to reactive tasks; when schools reopen and harm becomes 'unhidden' likely to lead to increased demand; additional burdens on foster carers and increased risk (vulnerable age group); reduced opportunity for victims of DV or children who are victims of abuse to engage with professionals alone. Some staff are expressing concern about homeworking, describing it as now living at work. Arrangements are in place to support staff with access to offices as appropriate.
- 8.3 **Positives and Advantages** of working virtually has reduced travel time and expenses; some meetings have been more focused and better attended with the use of teams; training has continued to be accessed virtually and has received positive feedback; more flexible work life balance for some; has developed staff's digital skills and some young people have liked virtual contact.
- 8.4 Working in a different way has created a number of opportunities that will be explored further by Children's Services such as: more flexible working; further virtual /learning options; consideration of mix of face to face and virtual contacts; working differently with partners, which builds on the momentum of the One Coventry approach.

9 Lessons learnt during COVID-19

- 9.1 During this unprecedented time, lessons continue to be learnt. Children's Service continue to embrace the changes and share with staff to further improve services and outcomes for children and families.

10 Children's Services Current position – February 2021

- 10.1 Children's Services has maintained core service delivery throughout the COVID-19 pandemic; delivering ongoing protection, support and intervention to vulnerable families across Coventry during the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 10.2 All buildings (Area Teams, Family Hubs, Broadgate House) have remained open during the second lockdown in November 2020 and continue to remain open following the third lockdown in January 2021.
- 10.3 Area Teams and Family Hubs operate via bubble teams with only those on duty in the building to ensure staffing levels are kept to a minimum at all times.
- 10.4 Children's Homes have continued to operate within the operating risk assessment. Broad Park House has continued to remain open with short breaks both targeted and community operating within the parameters of the risk assessment.
- 10.5 Family time has continued face to face as much as possible within the confines of the risk assessments of the child and carer and supplemented by virtual visits.
- 10.6 Foster carers have been visited remotely unless a face to face visit has been required.
- 10.7 All out of city visits to looked after children have been virtual unless it is risk assessed that a face to face visit is required.

- 10.8 Help and Protection services have reverted to more virtual visits where it is safe to do so.
- 10.9 Staff who can work effectively from home continue to be based at home.
- 10.10 All looked after children have been encouraged to attend school where possible during the lockdown period.
- 10.11 Until the service moves to a Hybrid model all Child Protection Reviews are held virtually, LAC reviews continue to be held virtually.
- 10.12 The service continues to target the recruitment of experienced social workers to reduce the reliance on agency staff.
- 10.13 Children's Services anticipate a further spike in demand when Schools return in March, as anticipated last year when Schools returned in September 2020. Hidden harm has led to increased complexity of the work coming in and complex risk and will be a further concern as Schools return.

11 Overall Summary

- 11.1 The service is experiencing significant pressure with the increase in demand as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, it remains a very challenging operating environment. All buildings and services have remained open during the lockdown and continue to work virtually with some face to face visits where it is safe to do so.
- 11.2 The service continues to work hard to maximise the opportunities for innovation and creativity and work in different ways to provide services. This is becoming more difficult with the shortage of social workers and lack of quality agency staff. A number of new initiatives are being explored to retain existing staff and encourage experienced social workers to Coventry.
- 11.3 The service has received additional temporary funding to recruit additional posts to manage increased caseloads and address the system under pressure during this difficult period.
- 11.4 Coventry is on a journey to good or better and is committed to achieving this. Working with and alongside Leeds Local Authority will enhance the pace of change and further improve outcomes for children in Coventry.

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Coventry City Council

Briefing note

To: Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2)

11 March 2021

Subject: Children's Services Continuous Improvement Progress

1 Purpose of the Note

- 1.1 To inform the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) of the progress with Children's Services improvement reported to the Continuous Improvement Executive Group on 10 February 2021.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Education and Children's Scrutiny Board (2) are recommended to:
- 1) To note the current progress
 - 2) Identify any areas the Board may want to look at in more detail
 - 3) Identify any further recommendations for the appropriate Cabinet Member

3 Information/Background

- 3.1 Ofsted re-inspected Children's Services on 6th - 30th March 2017, the outcome of the inspection was published on 13th June 2017, Children's Services were judged as "requires improvement to be good".
- 3.2 A report on the future arrangements for continuing and sustaining improvements in Coventry was presented by the Independent Chair and the Director of Children's Services at Improvement Board on 3 October 2018. It was agreed that the Children's Services Improvement Board is replaced by a Continuous Improvement Executive Group to retain political and corporate oversight of Children's Services Continuous Improvement.
- 3.3 The Continuous Improvement Executive Group ensure tighter focus on continuous improvement and Ofsted preparation. The impact of performance is managed and monitored by the group. This is an interim measure before returning to business as usual in accordance with the revised arrangements for Children's Safeguarding, and subject to satisfactory inspection. At this time the Executive Group would cease and oversight transferred to Coventry Safeguarding Children's Partnership and monitored as business as usual. Board members fully supported the revised arrangements and membership of the group.
- 3.4 The Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive continue to give public commitment that Children's Services remains a key priority for the Council. This includes prioritising funding for Children's Services to maintain its capacity to improve. The Council, alongside partner organisations continue a relentless focus on securing improvements in services for children, young people and families to ensure they are safeguarded and achieve positive outcomes.
- 3.5 The Ofsted framework (ILACS) includes focused visits to local authorities who are judged to be 'requires improvement'. Children's Services have received two visits. The first visit was

held on 30-31 January 2018. The visit focused on the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). The letter confirming the outcome of the visit was published on 22 February 2018.

- 3.6 A further focused visit was held on 26-27 February 2019. The visit focused on permanency planning and achieving permanency. The letter confirming the outcome of the visit was published on 21st March 2019.
- 3.7 The Ofsted Annual Conversation with regional representatives is undertaken each year, the meeting last year took place in March 2020. This year, the meeting will be held in April 2021.
- 3.8 In March 2020, Ofsted paused ILACS inspections due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Children's Services was anticipating a standard Inspection by September 2020. Ofsted published their interim plans for a phased return to routine inspections which commenced from September 2020. The Interim visits were paused again during the November 2020 lockdown.
- 3.9 A report proposing arrangements to transfer Children's Services Continuous Improvement to Coventry Safeguarding Children's Partnership was approved by the Children's Services Continuous Improvement Executive Group on 28th October 2020. The new arrangements will be effective from 1st April 2021, the governance in place will ensure that Children's Services continuous improvement remains a political priority. Education and Children's Scrutiny Board members will continue to receive reports on Children's Services continuous improvement and progress on a quarterly basis.
- 3.10 On 5 January 2021 a further national lockdown was announced. Ofsted have confirmed that interim focused visits will be undertaken during the national lockdown period commencing from February 2021, changes will be made to make the process more manageable and proportionate.

4 Children's Services Continuous Improvement Progress

- 4.1 The Continuous Improvement plan was reviewed and signed off as completed by the Executive Group board members on 10 February 2021.
- 4.2 The oversight of continuous improvement will be transferred to Coventry Safeguarding Children's Partnership on 1 April 2021, the governance arrangements agreed will ensure that regular reporting on Children's Service continuous improvement is reported to Senior Managers and elected members on a regular basis. Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board will receive quarterly reports in future.
- 4.3 Executive Group members highlighted the significant improvements over the last seven years and acknowledged their thanks and appreciation to the Independent Chair for his experience and expertise in steering the improvement journey forward over the last five years. The service will get to 'good' and the continuous improvement journey will continue and be reported via the Coventry Safeguarding and Children's Partnership.
- 4.4 A refreshed Strategic Plan for 2021-2023 is being developed and will include the priorities and continuous improvement actions to be taken forward.

5 Children's Services response and impact of COVID-19

- 5.1 Children's Services continue to maintain core service delivery; delivering ongoing protection, support and intervention to vulnerable families across Coventry during the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 5.2 All services have continued to operate during the lockdown period. Area Teams and Family Hubs have remained open and have bubble teams and duty staff kept to a minimum at all times with remote homeworking used where possible.

- 5.3 Children's Homes have continued to operate within the operating risk assessment. Broad Park House has remained open offering short breaks both targeted and community breaks.
- 5.4 Risk assessments continue to be updated to reflect the changes in government guidance: staff are encouraged to take the Lateral Flow tests weekly and staff who meet the criteria in the Standard Operating Procedure for vaccinations are being offered a vaccine.
- 5.5 The service continues to be under pressure with the increased numbers of child in need work, increased numbers of Child Protection work and LAC numbers increasing. Caseloads are higher than average and recruiting to experienced social worker vacancies remain a significant challenge.

6 Workforce

- 6.1 The recruitment and retention of experienced frontline Children and Families Social Workers continues to be a challenge. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to have a significant impact on recruitment and is making it difficult to recruit experienced social workers during this period. This has led to an increased use of agency staff and increased financial impact.
- 6.2 The service continues to undertake exit interviews to understand why social workers leave.
- 6.3 Children's Services has successfully appointed an additional cohort of 9 Newly Qualified Social Workers (Cohort 7) who commenced on 25th January 2021. The Social Work Academy will manage a staggered cohort of NQSW's with an additional team to reduce the number of vacancies.
- 6.4 Coventry's Return to Practice (RTP) Programme relaunched in December, six successful candidates have been offered a shadowing opportunity to update their practice in a specific team and ultimately be offered a permanent opportunity to practice as a Children's Social Worker in Coventry.
- 6.5 Children's Services continue to work with the recruitment team and human resource colleagues to review further targeted campaigns and innovative ways to recruit and retain experienced social workers.

7 Performance Progress

- 7.1 The Performance Board continues to meet monthly to review Children's Services performance.
- 7.2 Performance activity has reduced slightly compared with the peak reached in October 2020, although numbers remain higher than a year ago. The impact of the new lockdown is likely to have a further impact on performance and see increased activity, as in the lockdown in March 2020.
- 7.3 There has been a slight increase in Contacts and Child Protection Plans and Looked After Children compared to the previous month, while referrals, Section 47 enquiries, Children in Need reduced slightly in comparison to last month.
- 7.4 The annual Performance Workshop held in February reviewed the current performance targets and measures and agreed the new targets and measures for 2021/22. The Performance Board will continue to monitor performance monthly and report progress to the Coventry Safeguarding Children's Partnership on a quarterly basis.

8 Leeds Family Valued Programme

- 8.1 Family Valued is a Leeds City Council system change programme designed to spread restorative practice across children's services. A key element is the expansion of the Family

Group Conferencing (FGC) service to a scale not previously seen in the UK, including for families experiencing domestic violence.

- 8.2 Coventry wants all children and young people in the authority to achieve the best possible outcomes. The pressure of numbers of children looked after, lack of local placement availability, has made it challenging to the service. The opportunity that Family Valued brings is significant and will strengthen Children's Services.
- 8.3 The cost to implement the Leeds Family Valued programme for the first two years will be met fully by the Department for Education.
- 8.4 A Cabinet Report on this matter will be considered by the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board at their meeting on 11th March 2021 with recommendations to monitor implementation of the programme.

9 Ofsted Interim Focused Visit and the Annual Ofsted Conversation

- 9.1 Following the suspension of routine inspections in March 2020 due to COVID-19, Ofsted outlined their interim plans for a phased return to routine inspections. The interim arrangements commenced in late September 2020. As a result of the lockdown in November 2020, visits were paused further.
- 9.2 In January 2021, Ofsted announced that following the national lockdown position – interim focused visits would re-commence from February 2021 onwards. It is likely that visits will be virtual. Coventry are anticipating an interim focused visit very soon.
- 9.3 Ofsted have confirmed that the annual Ofsted conversation will be held in April 2021. The Self-assessment is currently being updated to reflect the current position.

10 Overall Summary

- 10.1 The service continues to experience significant pressures with the increase in demand as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. It remains a very challenging operating environment within the national lockdown position. Staff continue to be encouraged to take the Lateral Flow tests weekly and priority frontline social care staff are being offered the vaccine.
- 10.2 Coventry is on a journey to good or better and is committed to achieving this. Working with and alongside Leeds Local Authority will enhance the pace of change and further improve outcomes for children in Coventry.
- 10.3 In the lead up to the Ofsted Interim Focused visit the Children's senior leadership team and extended Leadership Team continue to work together to drive forward practice improvements and service changes. This phase of significant demand and improvement relies heavily on corporate support and the support from partners to ensure that improvement continues. There is explicit intention to ensure that Children's Services reaches a position where it is continuously achieving good outcomes for the Children of Coventry.

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Cabinet
Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2)
Council

9 March 2021
11 March 2021
16 March 2021

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources - Councillor R Brown
Cabinet Member for Children and Young People – Councillor P Seaman

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Director of Childrens Services

Ward(s) affected:

All

Title: Strengthening Families – Family Valued Programme

Is this a key decision?

Yes - The proposal involves financial implications in excess of £1 million.
The total amount is 4,062,295 for two years commencing 1 April 2021 – 31 March 2023.

Executive Summary:

Family Valued is a Leeds City Council system change programme designed to spread restorative practice across children's services. A key element is the expansion of the Family Group Conferencing (FGC) service to a scale not previously seen in the UK, including for families experiencing domestic violence.

There are 2 core strands to the programme;

- Awareness raising and deep dive training to embed restorative practice across social work, Children's Services and the wider workforce for children, families and communities.
- Expansion of FGCs to more families, including those affected by domestic violence and with a new model prior to Initial Child Protection Conferences.

An evaluation was undertaken 16 months into the Leeds programme which found that almost all of the Family Valued outcomes had been achieved. There were statistically significant reductions in;

- Number of looked after children
- Rate of LAC per 10,000 population
- Number of Child Protection Plans
- Number of children in need

Other outcomes were also identified at the time of the evaluation such as improvements in school attendance, number of children leaving care and returning to their families, and rates of re-referrals for domestic violence.

The Leeds Family Valued approach reflects the 'Coventry way' - children are at the centre of practice. This reflects the values of the Leeds model which places families in control and enables them to reduce dependency on specialist services, develop resilience and capacity and take the lead in decision making and ownership of their plan.

The Coventry approach encourages workers to establish a relationship-based method to working with children and families. As a Signs of Safety local authority social workers are already working to a strength based and restorative framework. Existing approaches would need to be developed further to take account of the Leeds Family Valued model.

Coventry is on a journey to good or better and is committed to achieving this. Working with and alongside Leeds Local Authority this proposal would enhance the pace of change and further improve outcomes for children in Coventry.

The cost to implement the Leeds Family Valued programme for the first two years will be met fully by the DfE Grant of £4.1m commencing 1 April 2021 – 31 March 2023.

- 2021/22 £2.0m
- 2022/23 £2.1m

Recommendations:

Cabinet is requested to:

- 1) Recommend that Council accepts the grant funding of £4,062,295 from the Department for Education for the two-year period to support the change programme to spread restorative practice across Children's Services.

The Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) is recommend to:

- 1) Support the acceptance of the grant funding of £4,062,295 from the Department for Education for the two-year period to support the change programme to spread restorative practice across Children's Services.
- 2) Receive a briefing on the Family Valued programme and further reports on progress of the project.

Council is recommended to:

- 1) Accept the grant funding of £4,062,295 from the Department for Education for the two-year period to support the change programme to spread restorative practice across Children's Services.

List of Appendices included:

None

Other useful background papers:

None

Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

Yes - Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) - 11th March 2021

Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

No

Will this report go to Council?

Yes - Council - 16th March 2021

Report title: Strengthening Families – Family Valued Programme

1. Context (or background)

1.1 Family Valued is a Leeds City Council system change programme designed to spread restorative practice across children’s services. A key element is the expansion of the Family Group Conferencing (FGC) service to a scale not previously seen in the UK, including for families experiencing domestic violence.

There are 2 core strands to the programme;

- Awareness raising and deep dive training to embed restorative practice across social work, Children’s Services and the wider workforce for children, families and communities.
- Expansion of FGCs to more families, including those affected by domestic violence and with a new model prior to Initial Child Protection Conferences.

1.2 Coventry is on a journey to good or better and is committed to achieving this. Working with Leeds Local Authority will enhance the pace of change and further improve outcomes of children in Coventry.

1.3 Coventry wants all children and young people in the authority to achieve the best possible outcomes. The pressure of numbers of children looked after, lack of local placement availability, has made it challenging to the service. The opportunity that Family Valued brings is significant and will strengthen Children’s Services.

2. Leeds Family Valued Programme Model recommended proposal

2.1 The Leeds Family Valued approach reflects the ‘Coventry way’- children are at the centre of practice. This reflects the values of the Leeds model which places families in control and enables them to reduce dependency on specialist services, develop resilience and capacity and take the lead in decision making and ownership of their plan.

2.2 The Coventry approach encourages workers to establish a relationship-based method to working with children and families. As a Signs of Safety local authority social workers are already working to a strength based and restorative framework. Existing approaches would need to be developed further to take account of the Leeds Family Valued model. An example of this would be by ensuring that a family group conference always take place before the initial child protection conference (ICPC). The Leeds Practice Principles are similar to those utilised by Coventry which would enable an effective synergy, allowing for strong foundations to embed the Leeds Family Valued model to maximum effect.

2.3 Coventry already mirrors Leeds in terms of locality-based teams of workers and is keen to expand the FGC service, in line with the Leeds Family Valued model to ensure that families have access to FGC at the point of statutory intervention. As part of this, the relationship between statutory and children’s services and families will need to be redefined and will be framed around the restorative approach, strengthening of the voice of the child and increased involvement of families in care planning which is central to the Leeds model.

2.4 Family Valued is informed by an ‘Outcomes Based Accountability’ (OBA) approach to Children’s Services – that at all levels there needs to be a clear focus on whether individuals, services or the child welfare system as a whole is improving the lives of children and families.

2.5 The Strengthening Families, Protecting Children Programme is similarly focused on outcomes – principally on whether the programme is helping services to change the way they work to enable more children to stay safely at home within their families, and less needing to become looked after.

3 Result of consultation undertaken - Shared Review and Plan findings

3.1 As part of the implementation of the Leeds Family Valued model, the Family Valued team from Leeds City Council undertook a joint review of children's services in November 2020. The review is a 'critical friend' exercise to assess Coventry's strengths and areas of priority.

3.2 The review included four stages:

- **Information gathering and analysis;** this involved requesting information and data documentation to help inform the work programme and to allow the Leeds Team to build a richer picture of Coventry children's services.
- **Case Review:** this involved experienced social work leaders from Leeds reviewing a sample of cases – across Early Help, Child in Need, Child Protection and Child Looked After. This was undertaken online and involved a detailed analysis of the full history or work with the child and their family.
- **Local Authority Engagement;** this involved a number of virtual meetings with the Children's Services Leadership team; focus groups with managers and staff to understand what it is like to work in Coventry and also included an observation of a child protection conference and a Looked after child (LAC) review.
- **Evaluation and Review;** following the local engagement, the Leeds programme team reviewed and evaluated the findings based on three key questions:

-What is the current level of quality and impact of practice?

-What improvement is required?

-What are the areas of practice to be targeted by Family Valued and how will this be delivered?

3.3 A summary of the recommendations is highlighted below:

- *Coventry and Leeds to work together to continue to strengthen practice across Early Help, with a particular focus on: relational challenge in management oversight and supervision; improving the engagement of families in developing quality shared plans; and developing ways of working with the expanded Family Group Conference (FGC) teams.*
- *Leeds and Coventry to work together to undertake a more detailed joint review of the Front Door once face to face working returns*
- *Coventry and Leeds to work together on improvement work to continue to strengthen the Front Door, particularly in improving recording and management of consent; improving active engagement of fathers; balancing the structure and rigour of Signs of Safety (SoS) with more analysis of context and complexity.*
- *Leeds and Coventry to work together closely to develop and implement an intensive leadership, culture and practice development programme.*
- *Coventry and Leeds to work together to agree further work to review these arrangements and collaborate on improvement where required.*

3.4 There is an opportunity to review the outcomes of these positive interventions at the end of the joint programme with Leeds, which will inform decisions regarding the continuation, sustainability and scale of the programme beyond 2 years.

Any budget requirement to deliver the programme ongoing will be met by savings achieved via a reduction in both looked after children and child protection cases, by releasing costs from case holding workforce and looked after children placements.

The programme provides opportunities to deliver savings beyond the budget required to achieve sustainability by producing additional savings within looked after children and child protection budgets.

4 Timetable for implementing the Family Valued Programme

4.1 The joint shared review and plan was finalised by Leeds and Coventry and submitted to the DfE for funding approval to support the programme on 11th December 2020. The funding proposal includes:

- Developing a relationship-based practice in all service areas
- Expanding the Family Group Conference Service
- Undertaking a Reunification Project
- Strengthening Connected Persons/SGO's
- Promoting participation and influencing the voice of the child

4.2 The Department for Education confirmed approval to the funding on 20th January 2021 to implement from 1st April 2021.

4.3 The Family Valued Coventry Programme Board will be chaired by the Director of the Strengthening Families – Leeds Family Valued programme. The joint Action Plan will be implemented and managed through the Family Valued Programme Board. Chaired by the Director of Leeds Family Valued. The Vice Chair will be the Coventry DCS. The Project Sponsor will be a member of the Senior Management Board who will also be a member of the Programme Board. The terms of reference, including membership will be finalised and agreed between Coventry and Leeds once the programme and funding have been approved by Cabinet and Council.

4.4 A Project Team will be established to provide support across both local authorities. The team will work with senior leaders to develop, monitor and evaluate the shared plan. The project team will also include an apprenticeship role for a young person who has experienced care. Subject to approval of funding the broad timescales will be as follows:

- **March-July:**
 - Recruitment of new staff to services (recruitment to commence from March 2021 onwards)
 - Initial engagement – workshops with managers, staff and partner agencies to provide a background in the Family Valued ethos, approach and rationale
 - Restorative practice awareness training begins
 - Restorative Leadership programme for senior managers
 - Management oversight and supervision action learning sets for front line managers begin
 - Joining up local leaders of key Family Valued reform projects in Coventry with 'Leeds Link Leaders' – experienced managers and practitioners with expertise in the relevant area who will provide support and challenge to develop and implement shared detailed project plans.

- **April – September:**
 - New staff in post, supported by training and mentoring where necessary from Leeds
- **September-December:**
 - Management oversight and Restorative Practice Awareness programmes completed
 - Restorative practice training for schools
 - Restorative leadership programme for middle and frontline managers
 - Restorative ‘theory to practice’ training for social workers and other key practitioners
- **December-February:**
 - Restorative practice intensive training for local trainers and practice champions
 - Relational action learning sets for social work teams

5 Comments from the Director of Finance and the Director of Law and Governance

5.1 Financial implications

The cost to implement the Leeds Family Valued programme for the first two years will be met by the DfE Grant of £4.1m commencing 1 April 2021 – 31 March 2023.

- 2021/22 £2.0m
- 2022/23 £2.1m

It is expected that by April 2023 the fundamental principles of this system change programme will be embedded into the organisational culture of Children’s Services.

The continuation and scale of this programme beyond 2 years depends on the success criteria and quality of the outcomes, as well as savings delivered through the programme via a reduction in both looked after children and child protection cases, by releasing costs from the case holding workforce and looked after children placements.

The financial objectives and ambitions of the programme are to produce savings beyond the budget required to achieve sustainability and deliver additional savings within looked after children and child protection budgets. The opportunity to review the concept and financial impact in 2 years means there is no financial risk to the Local Authority.

If the programme does not achieve the reduction in costs required to support the programme ongoing, then the Director of Children’s Services will review the viability of continuing at a reduced scale or exiting the programme.

5.2 Legal implications

The Children Act 1989 places a general duty on local authorities to provide services for children in need and their families.

This duty requires a local authority to safeguard and promote the welfare of children within their area who are in need; and so far as is consistent with that duty, to promote the upbringing of such children by their families, by providing a range and level of services appropriate to those children’s needs.

6. Other implications

None

6.1 How will this contribute to the Council Plan (www.coventry.gov.uk/councilplan/)

This decision is consistent with the Council's aim to support vulnerable families helping services to change the way they work to enable more children to stay safely at home within their families, and less needing to become looked after.

6.2 How is risk being managed?

Risk will be managed by the Family Valued Coventry Programme Board. The board will provide robust challenge to the delivery of the targets set against the project. A Project Team will be responsible for implementing the Family Valued Coventry Programme and reporting on progress.

6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

An additional 33 staff will be employed to implement the Family Valued Coventry Programme. The opportunity that Family Valued brings is significant and will strengthen Children's Services and enhance the pace of change and further improve outcomes for children in Coventry.

6.4 Equalities / EIA

The Family Valued Coventry Programme will contribute to the outcomes for looked after children. The model places families in control and enables them to reduce dependency on specialist services, develop resilience and capacity and take the lead in decision making and ownership of their plan regardless to any needs they may have around race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation and disability.

6.5 Implications for (or impact on) climate change and the environment

None

6.6 Implications for partner organisations?

The implications of additional resources to deliver the Family Valued Programme services will change the way the service work with local partners to enable more children to stay safely at home within their families, and less needing to become looked after.

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Contributor/approver name	Title	Service	Date doc sent out	Date response received or approved
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Tina Pinks	Finance Manager	Finance	22/01/21 29/01/21 04/02/21	27/01/21 01/02/21 05/02/21
Names of approvers for submission: (officers and members)				
Barrie Hastie	Director of Finance	-	03/02/21	04/02/21
Julie Newman	Director of Law and Governance	-	03/02/21 05/02/21	05/02/21
John Gregg	Director of Children's Services	-	27/01/21 29/01/21 08/02/21	29/01/21 01/02/21 11/02/21
Councillor P Seaman	Cabinet Member for Children and Young People	-	11/02/21	15/02/21
Councillor R Brown	Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources	-	11/02/21	15/02/21

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Please see page 2 onwards for background to items

24th September 2020
- Meeting cancelled
15th October 2020
Vulnerability and Disadvantaged Children and Young People as a result of Covid
3rd December 2020
Recommendations from Partnership Working in Children's Services T&F Group Coventry Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report Social Worker Recruitment and Retention
28th January 2021
Impact of Covid-19 on Schools Children's Services Improvement – Continuous Improvement Board report
11th March 2021
Update on vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people Children's Services Improvement – Continuous Improvement Board report Family Valued Programme
Wednesday 24th March – SB2 invited to SB5
Adult and Children's Mental Health Services
Items paused due to the pandemic
School Performance Information – validated data Children Missing Education One Strategic Plan Adoption Service Annual Report Children's Services Strategic Plan and Journey to Excellence (first meeting 20/21) Family Health and Lifestyles Service update Coventry and Warwickshire Maternity, Children and Young People Programme (MCYP) (Joint SB5)

Date	Title	Detail	Cabinet Member/ Lead Officer
24th September 2020	- Meeting cancelled		
15th October 2020	Vulnerability and Disadvantaged Children and Young People as a result of Covid	Referred from Scrucro at their meeting on 29 th July to look in more detail at the numbers of children, young people who are vulnerable and disadvantaged and how they are being supported throughout the pandemic	Cllr Seaman John Gregg
3rd December 2020	Recommendations from Partnership Working in Children's Services T&F Group	To agree the recommendations identified by the T&F group	Cllr Sandhu Gennie Holmes
	Coventry Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report	To consider the annual report of the Safeguarding Partnership Annual Report, including performance and objectives for the coming year	Cllr Seaman John Gregg Health rep, Police rep
	Social Worker Recruitment and Retention	To look at actions taken to improve recruitment and retention of social workers, reduce the reliance on agency staff and create a stable work force	Cllr Seaman John Gregg Lee Pardy-McLaughlin
28th January 2021	Impact of Covid-19 on Schools	To consider the impact of Covid-19 on schools. Scrucro considered an item on schools at their meeting on 29 th July – this item will consider in more detail now that pupils will have been back for a term. Also, to include children missing education and home schooling	Cllr Maton Kirston Nelson
	Children's Services Improvement – Continuous Improvement Board report		John Gregg Cllr Seaman
11th March 2021	Update on vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people	Following the item considered at their meeting on the 15 th October, the Board requested a further update.	Cllr Seaman John Gregg

Date	Title	Detail	Cabinet Member/ Lead Officer
	Children's Services Improvement – Continuous Improvement Board report		
	Family Valued Programme	To look in more detail at the programme and consider how scrutiny can be involved in monitoring outcomes	John Gregg Cllr Seaman
Wednesday 24th March – SB2 invited to SB5	Adult and Children's Mental Health Services	SB2 have been invited to SB5 to consider the children's aspect of Mental Health Service.	
Items paused due to the pandemic			
	School Performance Information – validated data	A report on school performance data using validated data, including LAC and vulnerable groups, as well as gender analysis. Also to consider the most effective way to present the data available.	Kirston Nelson Juliet Silverton Cllr Maton
	Children Missing Education	To include children excluded, at risk of exclusion and home schooled	Kirston Nelson Sara Mills, Jeanette Essex Cllr Maton
	One Strategic Plan	The One Strategic Plan was approved by Cabinet in Feb 2020. The Board will monitor progress on implementation of the plan.	Kirston Nelson Cllr Maton
	Adoption Service Annual Report	Annual report – including information about the diversity of the adoption panel and adopters as well as support to birth mothers after their children have been adopted	Cllr Seaman Paul Smith
	Children's Services Strategic Plan and Journey to Excellence (first meeting 20/21)	At their meeting on 28 th November, the Board requested progress on data from performance highlights, with demographics where possible, provided in the strategic plan. Also, to include RAG ratings from the action plan.	John Gregg Cllr Seaman

Date	Title	Detail	Cabinet Member/ Lead Officer
	Family Health and Lifestyles Service update	The service includes the following; Family Nurse Partnership (supporting first time teenage parents), Health Visiting, Infant feeding, Stop Smoking in Pregnancy, Family Weight management – Be Active Be Healthy, School Nursing and support for BAME families. The paper will provide an overview on how the service is being redesigned to ensure that there is an even greater focus on increasing levels of service to those with greater health inequalities in Coventry.	Harbir Nagra Sue Frossell Charlotte Finlayson - SWFT
	Coventry and Warwickshire Maternity, Children and Young People Programme (MCYP) (Joint SB5)	Looking scrutinise plans to develop and deliver joined-up services commissioned for babies, children, young people and their families being developed as part of the Coventry and Warwickshire Health and Care Partnership work programme.	Anna Hargraves, South Warwickshire CCG