



Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2)

Time and Date

10.00 am on Thursday, 21st December, 2023

Place

Diamond Rooms 1 and 2 - Council House

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 23rd November 2023
 - b) Matters Arising
4. **Family Valued Programme** (Pages 11 - 16)

Briefing Note of the Interim Director for Children's Services
5. **Coventry Holiday Activities and Food Programme** (Pages 17 - 22)

Briefing Note of the Director of Education and Skills
6. **Work Programme and Outstanding Issues**

Briefing Note of the Chief Legal Officer
7. **Any Other Business**

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

Julie Newman, Chief Legal Officer, Council House, Coventry

Wednesday, 13 December 2023

Note: The person to contact about the agenda and documents for this meeting is Tom Robinson Email: tom.robinson@coventry.gov.uk

Membership: Councillors J Blundell, S Hanson (Co-opted Member), Jackson (Co-opted Member), S Keough, T Khan, R Lancaster, A Masih, S Nazir, E M Reeves, CE Thomas (Chair), A Tucker and Vohra (Co-opted Member)

By invitation Councillor A Jobbar (Deputy Cabinet Member for Children and Young People), K Sandhu (Cabinet Member for Education and Skills), and P Seaman (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People)

Public Access

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Tom Robinson

Email: tom.robinson@coventry.gov.uk

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2)
held at 10.00 am on Thursday, 23 November 2023

Present:

Members: Councillor CE Thomas (Chair)
Councillor N Akhtar (substitute for Cllr R Lancaster)
Councillor M Ali (substitute for Cllr S Nazir)
Councillor J Blundell
Councillor S Keough
Councillor A Masih
Councillor M Mutton (substitute for Cllr T Khan)
Councillor E M Reeves
Councillor A Tucker

Co-Opted Members: Mrs S Hanson, Mr D Jackson and Mr G Vohra

Other Members: Councillor R Brown (Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources)
Councillor P Seaman (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People)
Councillor A Jobbar (Deputy Cabinet Member for Children and Young People)
Councillor E Ruane (Chair of the Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board (1))

Employees (by Directorate):

Children's Services N Macdonald (Interim Director), S Kinsell, S Watson, A Whitrick

Law and Governance G Holmes, T Robinson, C Sinclair

Apologies: Councillors T Khan, R Lancaster, and S Nazir

Public Business

13. Declarations of Interests

The Board noted that Cllr A Tucker and Co-Opted Member D Jackson were members of the Fostering Panel. As this was not a disclosable pecuniary interest, they remained in the meeting.

14. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 5 October 2023 were agreed and signed as a true record.

There were no matters arising.

15. **Exclusion of Press and Public**

RESOLVED that the Board agrees to exclude the press and public under Sections 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 relating to the private report in Minute 20 below headed 'Homes for Looked After Children and Cost of Placements' on the grounds that the report involves the likely disclosure of information as defined in Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. The grounds for privacy are that it refers to information relating to an individual and the financial or business affairs of an organisation and the amount of expenditure proposed to be incurred by the Council under a particular contract for the supply of goods or services. The public interest in maintaining the exemption under Schedule 12A outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

16. **Social Worker Recruitment and Retention - Workforce Proposals**

The Board considered a Briefing Note of the Interim Director for Children's Services on social worker recruitment and retention – workforce, proposals, implementation and progress to date.

The Briefing Note indicated that recruitment and retention of social workers is a national problem and accepted in the government's response to the Independent Review of Social Care. The workforce profile over the past few years has led to Children's Services supporting a "grow our own" approach, with a key focus on enabling social workers into the profession and developing into experienced social workers with high quality practice standards.

Therefore, the local picture in Coventry in many ways mirrors the regional and national picture. Coventry has continued to face challenges to recruitment and retention of social workers, which has impacted the stability of the workforce and the number of agency staff required to cover vacancies. Coventry is based within the West Midlands, in an area where there are a number of local authorities all competing for the same pool of social workers, which makes it a competitive market for social workers.

In response it was highlighted that Coventry Children's Services vision for the Social Work workforce is to secure a stable, permanent, highly skilled and capable workforce; a workforce who are able to uphold the One Cov values of Coventry City Council, working in the 'The Coventry Way' – the children's services practice approach informed by signs of safety, relational and restorative practices. A stable and permanent workforce can more effectively work with children, young people and families in a way which supports to improve outcomes.

The Briefing Note outlined a range of positive recruitment and retention initiatives the service is progressing to help recruit and retain Social Workers further and reduce the number of Social Worker vacancies. These included but were not limited to:

- A Review of Team Managers, Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), Independent Reviewing Officers (IRO's) and Child Protection chairs pay in order to bring in line with regional rates of pay.
- Retention Payments to experienced Social Workers until end of March 2024, replaced with a Progression pathway for experienced social workers the opportunity to progress to Advanced Social Workers through a progression panel process to be implemented from 1 April 2024.
- Continuation in the expansion of the Social Work Academy supporting more Newly Qualified Social Workers to grow experience in the service and fill vacancies on a more permanent basis.

The Board questioned Officers and received responses on a number of matters relating to social worker recruitment and retention including:

- Recruitment campaigns and potential schemes with secondary schools for children who want to be social workers.
- The 'Grow Your Own' initiative.
- Fast-track programs and the qualifications received.
- Cooperation with neighbouring authorities to pool resources and compete in a competitive recruitment and retention market.
- Social Work courses from Coventry University.
- Staff wellbeing programs and mandatory involvement.
- Work placements for those studying health and social care.
- Staff mentoring schemes for a younger workforce.
- Retention rates in comparison to the national average and feedback from exit interviews.
- Retention payments and any conditions attached.

Councillor P Seaman (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People) thanked officers for the Briefing Note and encouraged the Board to attend the Social Worker open days that have been a very successful recruitment tool for the service. The Board, requested that the Cabinet Member and officers share details of any future events as wide as possible, including with the Board to ensure wider participation from diverse communities.

RESOLVED that the Board:

- 1. Notes the current progress.**
- 2. Requests that details of Social Worker open events are shared to ensure wider participation with diverse communities.**

16. Homes for Looked After Children and Cost of Placements

The Board considered a Briefing Note of the Interim Director of Children's Services which provided an outline to the challenges in finding appropriate residential care for children, including those who have a high level of diverse and complex needs, and consequent impact of the cost of these children's placements. A corresponding private Briefing Note detailing confidential matters was also submitted for consideration (Minute 20 below refers) .

Officers highlighted that, wherever possible, children and their families will be supported to remain living together when it is safe to do so. The Service's Strengths based; outcomes focused Family valued approach seeks to enable families to find the solutions to challenges they face.

Families are supported through Family Network Meetings and Family Group Conferences (FGC) to identify family led solutions. If a child cannot remain in the care of their parent/s, the wider family network is explored, supporting connected adults to become Kinship (Connected) foster carers, or a Special Guardian.

If this is not viable, a foster placement will be sought, enabling children to receive care and support in a family environment, through either the Coventry Fostering service or via an Independent Fostering Agency (IFA). For some children, due to their complexity of need, placing them in a children's home will be deemed the most appropriate care plan and only when Coventry Council internal children's homes or block providers cannot care for them, would the Service explore the wider residential market of commissioned placements.

There are currently 67 children living in a residential children's home, placed by Coventry Children's Services, a reduction from quarter one of 9 children. Trend analysis of data shows there is often an increase in June each year as foster carers are unable/ unwilling to care for new children due to planned holidays and carers offering respite support to each other.

A bi-monthly review is undertaken of all children living in residential care, to consider their plans to move on, in line with their care plan. In September 2023, a deep dive review was undertaken of the 74 children who were living in residential care by Children's Services Leadership Team (CSLT) and a review of the highest cost placements with the Chief Executive and Chief Partnership Officer. The review identified that there were clear plans for each child living in a children's home and highlighted the complexity and challenges of finding homes for some of our looked after children. Although the numbers of children living in a children's home have reduced, costs have increased for newly commissioned residential placements significantly over the last 12 months.

Officers emphasised that this is a national challenge as evidenced in the Competition and Market's Authority report of March 2022, the Independent Review of Children's Social care of May 2022, and the Government's consultation response to this review – Stable Homes: Built on Love (February 2023) that there is recognition that the children's placement market is broken. These problems break down into two main areas. A lack of placements of the right kind, thereby increasing risk of unregulated placements and secondly that larger providers are making materially higher profits, and charging materially higher prices, than we would expect if this market were functioning effectively. There is also a concern around the high level of debt some providers have and the impact if they could no longer operate and therefore the impact on individual children and the LA's ability to meet these children's needs.

Recent reports from Warwickshire & Cambridgeshire highlight the challenges they are facing in relation to the residential market. Warwickshire identified that they are paying 57k per week for one child and Cambridgeshire 85k per week for one child.

An outcome from the Care Review is to increase, strengthen & upskill those who work in residential children's homes. The Strategic lead for Looked after Children (Corporate Parenting) is working with the Department for Education and Ofsted on this, representing the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS). Alongside the Operational Lead for Residential Children's Homes, meeting and visits to some of the Service's children's homes from 4 DfE representatives, including the Policy Lead - Children's Homes Workforce - took place on the 7th of November.

Councillor P Seaman (Cabinet Member for Children and Young People) echoed the sentiments of the Briefing Note and the difficulties of trying to deliver a service to vulnerable children, young people and families when private providers are having free reign to profit. The Cabinet Member supported officers in reassuring the Board that the best options and outcomes were being sought in the difficult landscape of looked after children and highlighted that some of the current burdens on the service would be eased by the opening of 5 new residential children's homes alongside the various recruitment schemes in place.

Councillor R Brown (Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources) similarly chastised the unregulated and uncontrollable financial profiteering of vulnerable children, young people, and their families. Whilst recognising the valuable and important hard work of officers and staff involved, the Cabinet Member stressed the need for an urgent expedited review of the looked after children sector and governmental legislation to control what has become a financially unsustainable market.

The Board questioned Officers and received responses on a number of matters relating to homes for looked after children and cost of placements including:

- Family network meetings and conferences as prevention for children coming into care and their timeframes.
- Other agency contributions to costs of placements.
- Misconceptions from residents about children's homes in residential areas and strategies to effectively manage these.
- The DBVSP (Delivering Better Value in SEND Programme) and its ability to improve the delivery of SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability) services for children and young people whilst optimising financial sustainability for Local Authorities.
- The process for placing children when there are no places within Coventry.
- Health inequalities impacts, children with autism, and training for carers to help children with autism.
- New residential children's homes and their provision for specialist care.
- A children's trust as a potential solution to recruitment issues and competitor to private providers.
- The use of capital to bring down revenue costs and the potential for regional solutions to the issue.
- The possibility of financial support from the Combined Authority.
- Distance of placements from the city for those children with the most complex needs.
- ICB (Integrated Care Board) cooperation.
- Deprivation of Liberty Orders (DoLs) – costs and decision-making process.

- Occupancy figures for new residential care settings.
- Residential children's homes for disabled children and young people.
- The evolving nature of complex care issues and evolving costs.
- The minimal requirement for residential placements for Unaccompanied Refugee and Asylum Seeker Children.

Councillor Brown, following responses from officers to the Board's questions, sympathised with the overwhelming complexity of the market and enquired about any potential regulation caps on provision costs from private providers. In response, the Interim Director for Children's Services recognised that while regulation caps were not currently in place, he agreed that both financial transparency and minimum timescales for residential placements were needed. He also highlighted the valuable role previously played by the voluntary sector that is no longer available. Similarly, the Strategic Lead for Looked After Children informed the Cabinet Member and the Board of previously implemented frameworks with financial caps for private providers. Deregulation in the sector, however, catalysed the transition to un-capped and more costly 'spot' placements.

Councillor Seaman thanked officers for the Briefing Note and offered her appreciation to the Board for helping to understand the complexities and bigger picture of the looked after children market. In response to a question regarding regional cooperation to tackle financial issues and the lack of residential children's homes, the Cabinet Member reassured the Board of her regular meetings with regional counterparts at the Local Government Association (LGA) and the West Midlands Regional Innovations Board to work collaboratively to tackle those issues in depth.

Similarly, Councillor Ruane (Chair of the Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board (1)) sought assurances from officers that the issues highlighted regarding looked after children and the cost of placements be treated as a transformation project and engaged with at the top level of the organisation. In response, the Interim Director of Children's Services highlighted the increasingly prominent role of staff from finance in children's services, the regular discussions being undertaken by the senior leadership team regarding looked after children and the cost of placements, the vital political and executive support within the council, and how the matter is being addressed as a financial stability issue and a corporate priority.

RESOLVED that the Board:

- 1. Notes the continued support for the Residential Children's Homes Review & Strategy 2023-2026 (Appendix 1) and the work being undertaken in relation to sufficiency, including value for money, addressing high-cost placements and improving outcomes for our looked after children.**
- 2. Undertake a visit to a newly built home for looked after children to better understand the need for provision.**
- 3. Requests that a review of this issue be considered by the Board at the first meeting in the 2024/25 Municipal Year and that the Cabinet**

Member for Strategic Finance and Resources be invited to attend that meeting.

18. Work Programme

The Board noted the Work Programme and agreed to bring the following item forward to the next meeting of the Scrutiny Board.

- School Place Sufficiency

19. Any Other Items of Public Business

There were no other items of business.

20. Homes for Looked After Children and Cost of Placements

Further to Minute 15 above, the Board received and noted a private Briefing Note of the Interim Director for Children's Services which set out the personal and commercially confidential matters relating to the Homes for Looked After Children and Cost of Placements.

21. Any other items of Private Business

There were no other items of private business.

(Meeting closed at 12.55 pm)

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Coventry City Council

Briefing note

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

Date: 21st December 2023

Subject: Family Valued Programme

1 Purpose of the Note

- 1.1 To update the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) on the progress and impact of the Family Valued Programme during the funded period, and to outline next steps.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Education and Children's Scrutiny Board (2) are recommended to:
- 1) Note the current progress and impact for children, young people and their families.
 - 2) Note the next steps in relation to sustaining and growing Coventry Family Valued.
 - 3) Identify any recommendations for the appropriate Cabinet Member.

3 Background and Information

- 3.1 Family Valued was introduced in Coventry Children's Services as part of the national Strengthening Families, Protecting Children (SFPC) Programme; a 5-year programme funded by the Department for Education (DfE), focussing on safely reducing the number of children entering care, through implementing one of three programmes: Leeds Family Valued, Herefordshire Family Safeguarding, North Yorkshire's No Wrong Door.
- 3.2 Coventry City Council were one of the adopter local authorities of the Family Valued Programme; a Leeds City Council whole-system change programme seeking to create a shift in culture towards working 'with' families rather than doing things 'to' or 'for' them. The overall aim was to support more children to live safely at home with their families and within their communities, through introducing restorative practices and services.
- 3.3 Coventry Children's Services received grant funding of £4,204,141 over a 2.5-year period. Coventry Family Valued launched in April 2021, with the funded period ending in September 2023. The grant funded 36 full-time equivalent (FTE) additional posts in Children's Services to support the implementation of Coventry Family Valued. These additional posts have seen the significant expansion of the Family Group Conference (FGC) Service, additional capacity within the Connected Persons Team and Participation Team, the implementation of a Reunification Project and the creation of a Restorative Practice Team.
- 3.4 Alongside the additional posts has been an implementation plan consisting of six workstreams: 1) Sustainability, Finance and Performance, 2) Embedding Relationship-Based Practice, 3) Expansion of Family Group Conferencing and New Restorative Services, 4) Promoting Connected Persons and Permanence through Special Guardianship Orders, 5) Reunification Project, 6) Voice and Influence.

3.5 Coventry Family Valued branding and communications across Children’s Services and the partnership has centred around the three spires of Coventry Family Valued, to support practitioners, managers, and partners to connect with the aims and objectives of the programme: Spire 1 - A child friendly city, Spire 2 - Family-led decision making, Spire 3 - The Coventry Way.

4 Child Friendly Cov

4.1 The Child Friendly Cov campaign has been the main driver under Spire 1 – A child friendly city. Child Friendly Cov has been developed alongside children, young people, partners, and local businesses, aspiring to make Coventry the best city in the UK for children and young people to live and grow-up in. Child Friendly Cov launched in February 2023. The four key priorities for Child Friendly Cov are that all children and young people in Coventry should: be and feel valued, be and feel safe, be and feel healthy, and have opportunities.

4.2 Since the launch of Child Friendly Cov there has been considerable progress made against these priorities, including the Early Help Strategy centring around them, an ongoing pilot of peer led mental health champions in schools, the development of safe spaces in the city being progressed, the creation of a Pupil Parliament and numerous events and activities taking place across the city. There are currently 34 official supporters of Child Friendly Cov, each of whom are actively working to support Child Friendly Cov in various ways. There is ongoing engagement activity to encourage further supporters across the city.

5 Family Group Conferencing (FGC)

5.1 FGC is central to the Family Valued approach, empowering families to lead on the decisions which affect them whenever safe to do so (Spire 2 – Family-Led Decision Making). Prior to the launch of Coventry Family Valued, there was a small FGC Service in Coventry (consisting of 1 x Team Manager and 5 x FGC Co-ordinators). Coventry Family Valued has seen a significant expansion of the FGC Service, with an additional 16 FTE posts created. This has enabled more families to benefit from having an FGC, with an increasing number of initial FGCs taking place year-on-year since the launch of Coventry Family Valued.

	FGC Referrals	Initial FGCs	Conversion Rate
2020/21	230	116	50%
2021/22	333	174	52%
2022/23	570	230	40%
April 2023 – September 2023*	255	146	57%

*NB: April 2023 – September 2023 data covers a 6-month period rather than 12 months for previous data.

5.2 Extensive work has taken place to establish where the FGC offer should be targeted, with a pilot taking place between May 2022 – August 2022, in the South Help and Protection Service Area, offering families an FGC at the earliest opportunity (during the Child and Family Assessment stage). The aim was to support family-led plans being developed from the outset of Children’s Services intervention, to reduce risk at this stage and avoid any escalation in risk, which could lead to statutory intervention. However, the findings of the pilot demonstrated targeting FGC at the assessment stage was not as effective as had been hoped, and despite a peak in referrals during the pilot, there was a low conversation rate to initial FGCs taking place, with many families not wanting to share their involvement with Children’s Services with their network at a time when the outcome of the assessment was not known, and could result in closure to Children’s Services regardless of an FGC taking place.

5.3 The learning from this pilot, as well as ongoing discussions with colleagues from Leeds City Council, informed an FGC Priority Criteria, positioning the targeting of FGC where there is a

risk of significant harm. The priority criteria was agreed in April 2023, with FGCs being seen as an entitlement for families where there is a risk of children becoming looked after; to support children to return home from care; and for children where there are child protection concerns, recognising that this is where family-led decision making will have the most impact and lead to improved outcomes for children, young people and their families.

- 5.4 There are already many examples of where FGC has made a difference for children, young people and their families. However, there is much to do to continue to drive family-led decision-making forwards, and to fully recognise the benefits of FGC. There is an agreement in place with Leeds City Council that they will continue to support Children’s Services in this area until March 2024.

6 Reunification Project

- 6.1 The Reunification Project launched in June 2021 (Spire 2 – Family-led decision making), with 6 x FTE additional posts created to support this work. Since the launch, 32 children and young people have returned home from care to live with their families, with 29 remaining at home following reunification. Of the 3 children who were reaccommodated, 1 has subsequently turned 18 and is accessing the leaving care service, 1 will remain accommodated, and for 1 of these young people the plan is still reunification with some further work with the young person and their family.
- 6.2 The Reunification Project has made a real difference to many children, young people and their families with their improved outcomes being the biggest success of this project. Alongside these improved outcomes for children and young people, the Reunification Project has made considerable financial savings through placement cost avoidance, with further projected savings.

	Placement Cost Avoidance				
	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Through Care - Cohort 1	£738,621	£1,653,659	£1,228,893	£690,317	£205,746
Through Care - Cohort 2		£883,678	£1,449,888	£1,187,945	£960,700
Looked After Children		£47,511	£129,634	£129,634	£129,634
Through Care – Cohort 3			£1,131,678	£1,844,588	£1,785,099
Total	£738,621	£2,584,849	£3,940,094	£3,852,485	£3,081,179
Less costs - £11,430	-£143,0101	-£503,645	-£569,834	-£569,834	-£569,834
Net impact	£595,611	£2,081,204	£3,370,260	£3,282,651	£2,511,345

- 6.3 The success of the Reunification Project led to further expansion in in July 2022, with 4 x FTE additional posts created (all funded through Children’s Services core budget). The achievements of the Reunification Project have been recognised not only within Coventry, but nationally, with the project shortlisted for two national awards (Social Worker of the Year Awards 2022 and Frontline Awards 2023). The project has also generated keen interest from other local authorities, with Coventry colleagues supporting Newcastle, Darlington and Sefton in relation to implementing similar projects.

7 Connected Carers and Special Guardians

- 7.1 Work has been undertaken to support more looked after children and young people to be cared for by someone connected to them, and to increase the proportion of looked after children who achieve permanence via special guardianship, rather than remaining in care (Spire 2 – Family-led decision making). In July 2021 the Initial Assessments for Connected Persons (previously completed by the child’s allocated social worker) transferred to being completed within the Connected Persons Team, who also complete the full Connected Person Foster Carer Assessments. Both aspects of the fostering assessment being undertaken within the same team has led to a greater consistency in the initial assessments

and fewer negative full assessments (as where applicants are unsuitable to meet the fostering regulations they are ruled out at an earlier stage). This improvement in practice has been well received, particularly by the Family Court. There has also been a shift to Connected Person Foster Carer Assessments being initiated prior to children becoming looked after, which has supported more timely decision making in relation to children being able to live with someone who is connected to them.

7.2 Consultation has taken place with Connected Carers and Special Guardians to explore their experiences and consider how the support they receive could be strengthened. This has resulted in an increased training offer, as well as invitations to celebration events and support groups, which build peer relationships with other Connected Carers and Special Guardians.

8 Restorative Practice Leads

8.1 There has been significant work undertaken over the course of the programme to develop the practice approach in Coventry (Spire 3 – The Coventry Way), introducing restorative and relational practice alongside Signs of Safety. The Restorative Practice Leads have been instrumental in supporting the implementation and embedding of restorative practice across Children’s Services, through offering training and workshops, supporting reflective spaces to consider more restorative ways of working with children and families, and supporting the workstream leads to progress the implementation plan.

9 Overall Impact

9.1 The aim of the Coventry Family Valued was to support more children and young people to live safely at home with their families and within their communities, wherever safe to do so, with the overarching measures of success being:

- Safe reduction in the number of looked after children.
- Safe reduction in the number of children on child protection plans.

Definition	March 2021	March 2022	March 2023	September 2023	December 2023
Number of children who are looked after by the Local Authority (excluding UASC)	735	683	652	647	642
Number of children who require a Child Protection Plan	461	511	508	508	465

9.2 Coventry Family Valued has delivered against a challenging backdrop, with national issues in relation to social work recruitment and retention, rising numbers of looked after children nationally, and a placement market which is untenable. Despite these challenges, culture and practice in Coventry has shifted; becoming more relational and restorative, and this is reflected in the improved outcomes for children and young people, with a reduction in the number of children who are in care. Practice improvements and improved outcomes for children, young people and their families in Coventry were recognised by Ofsted (inspection dates 20th June – 1st July 2023), with Coventry Children’s Services receiving a ‘good’ grading in all areas of judgement, with the report recognising that ‘relational social work and restorative practice are embedded across services’.

9.3 It was recognised that as we begun to reduce number of looked after children our number of children who require child protection plan would initially spike as we held risk in a different way. However, we are now beginning to see the impact of Coventry Family Valued at this

stage as well and further work is needed to support, challenge and shape practice and services, to lead to less children requiring statutory intervention.

10 Next Steps

10.1 Grant funding was fully utilised part way through 2023/24. Many programme posts continue to be funded through the Children's Services core budgets for the remainder of 2023/24. Looking forward, Children's Services is considering options for a sustainable Coventry Family Valued model for next year and beyond, building on the restorative practices that are being embedded across the service, with a commitment that Coventry Family Valued will continue. The following 9 priorities have been agreed for Coventry Family Valued in 2024, to build upon the achievements of the funded programme, and continue to drive Family Valued forwards in Coventry:

- **Priority 1: Introducing and embedding Re-Think Formulation**

Re-Think Formulation to be introduced and embedded within Children's Services and across the partnership as a group supervision approach, to assist in slowing down our thinking and building a shared understanding regarding children's circumstances.

- **Priority 2: Rollout of The Coventry Way – Practice Approach**

Embedding The Coventry Way across Children's Services and the partnership so that there is a shared approach to practice, with shared valued, and shared language, providing a scaffold for practitioners and managers, on which relational and restorative practice can flourish, and wherever safe to do so, children remain within their family and within their community.

- **Priority 3: Family-Led Decision Making – One Family, One Plan**

Ensuring that family, wider family and family networks are considered as early as possible to be part of the solution, embedding family-led decision making in practice across all social work teams.

- **Priority 4: Turning the curve and sharpening our understanding of risk of significant harm in Children's Services and across the partnership.**

Sharpening the focus on what constitutes risk of significant harm and ensuring that children and families are supported through intervention which is proportionate. Turning the curve in relation to the number of children who require Child Protection Plans and reducing the period of time children need to be subject to a Child Protection Plan for.

- **Priority 5: Pre-Proceedings (Families Together)**

Developing practice and intervention with children, young people, and families in pre-proceedings, through the use of high-challenge and targeted intensive support. This will include supporting the expansion of the Edge of Care Service to cover 0-8, to be able to support struggling families, regardless of the age of their children, aligning pre-proceedings work with Edge of Care, therefore reducing the length of pre-proceedings, recognising the role of the Child Protection Chairs in driving timely pre-proceedings, and diverting more children from care, wherever safe to do so.

- **Priority 6: Front Door**

To strengthen the Front Door and the management of consent. Ensuring that "Think Family" starts within MASH, and working with families and partner agencies is promoted at this early stage. This includes high-support and high-challenge conversations at the Front Door, helping to ensure that referrals made are for children in need and in need of protection.

- **Priority 7: Child Friendly Cov**

Continuing to embed Child Friendly Cov in Children's Services, across the City Council, the partnership and with local businesses, so that all children and young people in Coventry be and feel valued, be and feel safe, be and feel healthy, and have opportunities.

- **Priority 8: Supervision and InterVision**

Improving the quality of reflective supervision offered across Children's Services, and support peer learning spaces to develop supervision practice among managers.

- **Priority 9: Voice and Influence**

Further develop how children, young people, parents, and carers feed into Service Development in Coventry and regionally.

Authors:

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Coventry City Council

Briefing note

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

Date: 21st December 2023

Subject: Coventry Holiday Activities and Food programme

1 Purpose of the Note

- 1.1 This note provides an update on the Coventry Holiday Activities and Food Programme.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) are recommended to:
- 1) To note the information in the report about the Coventry Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme.
 - 2) To promote the Coventry HAF programme and to enable the programme to continue to develop and to contribute to the national HAF Framework case for continued funding post March 2025.

3 Overview of the Holiday Activities and Food Programme

- 3.1 The Holiday Activities and Food programme is a national initiative, aimed at addressing holiday inequalities through a blend of free positive activities and experiences coupled with health food and support to families. (See: [DfE HAF guidance](#)).
- 3.2 Coventry City Council receives an annual Department for Education grant (for 2023/24 with a further £100,000 Coventry Building Society investment) and leads a multi-agency partnership to deliver activities in the Easter, Summer and Christmas school holidays. (Search in web-browser: "Coventry HAF" or see: [Coventry HAF](#)).
- 3.3 The core eligibility criteria are school-age children (reception to year 11 inclusive) on benefits-related free school meals. Local Authority areas have discretion to broaden eligibility and Coventry have extended this to: child in need, child protection plan, child looked after and children assessed (through an early help assessment) to be in financial hardship or part of the Ukrainian Family Scheme (Professionals can refer appropriate children).
- 3.4 The national roll-out of HAF took place in 2021, with the first Coventry face-to-face delivery taking place in the 2021 summer holiday. HAF funding is committed until 31 March 2025, with Christmas 2024 currently being the last funded holiday. Coventry City Council is part of the national HAF network and there is a key focus on building the case for funding to be continued post-2025 in the context of increasing needs.

4 Summer 2023 delivery

- 4.1 The 2023 school summer holidays were the most recent, and largest, Coventry HAF holiday programme with c.4,000 unique eligible children attending plus family members, c.18,000 sessions attended, and c.20,000 meals provided. The programme included approximately 125 different types of clubs, activities.
- 4.2 The summer programme was delivered by approximately 100 organisations (40 directly grant-funded, see Appendix 1: Summer holiday providers). Providers are assessed according to a range of standards including their activities, provision of healthy food, nutritional education, safeguarding, health and safety, information to families. This assessment is made prior to awarding grant funding and post-delivery (based on delivery performance, visits, feedback from parents/carers and children).
- 4.3 Activities were held at a wide range of locations including primary schools, secondary schools, special schools, community centres, leisure centre and sports facilities, arts facilities, parks and other locations. (See Appendix 2: Where activities took place).
- 4.4 There was significant promotion of the summer programme through provider and programme marketing including: brochures and letters to eligible households, promotion through schools, social media, texts, promo-videos and other means.
- 4.5 An aim of the summer programme was to have inspiring activities that any eligible child or young person would want to participate in. (See: Appendix 3: Types of activities included in the summer programme). Food education is a focus for HAF activities, and this has included cooking sessions for children and family groups at some clubs.
- 4.6 There was extensive feedback from parents/carers, children and young people on the programme. We received circa 700 responses with 96% saying they would recommend the activities. The average rating of food provided was “very good” (i.e. rating 4, based on a scale of 1 (very poor) through to 5 (excellent)). Coventry has also received positive feedback on its programme from Childcare Works who are working with the DfE on the national HAF programme.

5 Inclusion and activities for children with additional needs

- 5.1 Approximately 30% of children who attended summer HAF activities were identified as children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.
- 5.2 The following areas were considered when focusing on Inclusion and activities for children with additional needs:
 - Up-skilling activity providers in SEND awareness through training provided by the SEND specialist service;
 - Supporting parents/carers to find activities that best fitted their child’s interests and needs;
 - Additional funding for providers to accommodate the needs of individual children; and
 - Contributing to Our Special School pilot programme (see below).

6 Special School Pilot programme – Summer 2023

- 6.1 As part of our focus on activities for children with additional needs, there was a partnership approach between the HAF programme and Coventry's special schools which was funded through Coventry Building Society investment. This resulted in 6 out of the 8 Coventry special schools hosting or partnering with other organisations to deliver a wide range of activities including: swimming, crafts, outdoor games, horse riding, cooking, sensory play, sports, trips (e.g. Cadbury World, Lego Discovery etc.)
- 6.2 Key points of feedback on this pilot from parents/carers, children/young people and staff:
- the opportunities students had to forge new friendships;
 - the unique experiences pupils were able to have;
 - the comfort families and students felt being in a familiar 'safe space' with staff members with whom they had established and trusting relationships;
 - the complexity of needs that were able to be catered for with 1:1 or 2:1 staff to student ratios and inclusive school venues which are not typically available through mainstream holiday clubs;
 - parents and carers valued the experiences their children had during the holidays.

7 Winter programme

- 7.1 The Coventry HAF winter programme (school Christmas holidays) opened for bookings on 7th December. As at 8th December over 1,700 children had been booked on over 3,800 sessions for 60 different bookable sessions delivered by 27 directly-funded organisations.

8 Areas of focus for Coventry HAF in 2024

- 8.1 The key areas of development and focus for 2024 include:
- Further development of our offer to children and young people with additional needs;
 - Further development of our secondary school and skills-based offer in partnership with secondary schools, the Coventry Youth Partnership, Coventry and Warwick universities and others; and
 - A continued increase in attendance at HAF activities.

9 Health Inequalities Impact

- 9.1 Addressing inequalities is a key part of the HAF programme and the programme has a positive impact on health inequalities through positive activities, healthy food, and food education.

Appendix 1: Summer holiday providers

Appendix 2: Where activities took place

Appendix 3: Types of activities included in the summer programme

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Organisation: Coventry City Council

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Appendix 1: Summer holiday providers

The following providers were directly funded:

All Saints C of E Primary School, Aptitude, Arts a Riot, Ascension Dance Company, Baginton Fields School, Barr's Hill School, Cardinal Newman Catholic School, Canley Community Centre, Coventry Boys and Girls Club, Coventry Outdoors, Coventry Rugby, Coventry SDA, Cre8fun, Creative Optimistic Visions, CV Life/Culture Coventry, Edgewick Primary, Empowr-U/Energ!se, Epic Academy/SCCU, Feeding Coventry, Guardian Ballers, Guiding Young Minds, Highly Sprung, Holbrooks Community Care Association, Holy Family Primary School, Kingsbury School, My Activities, Onside Coaching, PlayPals (St Christophers), Rising Stars, Riverbank School, SDH Academy, St John the Divine Church, Sky Blues in the Community, Staffordshire Winter Sports Club (Planet Ice), Tiverton School, University of Warwick Holiday Scheme, Vanny Radio, WATCH/Hillz FM, Willenhall Community Forum and Woodfield School.

Appendix 2: Where activities took place

Activities took place in the following locations:

- **Primary schools:** Aldermans Green, Aldermoor Farm, All Saints, Allesley Hall, Charter, Edgewick, Good Shepherd, Gosford Park, Grangehurst, Henley Green, Holy Family, John Gulson, Little Heath, Longford Park, Manor Park, Our Lady, St Christophers, St Johns, Stoke Heath, Templars, Walsgrave C of E
- **Secondary schools:** Barrs Hill, Cardinal Newman, Cardinal Wiseman, Grace Academy, President Kennedy, Sidney Stringer
- **Special schools:** Bagington Fields, Kingsbury, Riverbank, Tiverton, Woodfield
- **Community Centres/facilities:** Broad Horizon Enterprise Centre, Canley Community Centre, Coventry Boys and Girls Club, Coventry Central SDA church, Eastern Green Village Hall, Foleshill Community Centre, Foleshill Community Centre, Hagard Community Space (Willenhall Community Forum), Holbrooks Community Centre, Holbrooks Community Care Association, St James church, St John the Divine, Stoke Aldermoor Community Centre, Stoke Heath Community Centre, Stoke Park Youth Centre, The Crez (Jubilee Crescent Community Centre), WATCH, Wood End Community Centre
- **Leisure Centres/sports Facilities:** The Wave, Alan Higgs, AT7 Centre, Coventry Rugby (Butts Park Arena), Moat House Neighbourhood and Leisure Centre, Planet Ice, XCEL Leisure Centre, Coombe Abbey Go-Ape!
- **Arts:** The Albany Theatre, Coventry Transport Museum, Daimler Powerhouse, Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Warwick Arts Centre
- **Parks:** Coombe Abbey Country Park, Edgewick Park, Gosford Green
- **University:** University of Warwick
- **Other locations:** Aztec Adventure, Barry Island, Brewers Fayre, Cadbury World, Cardiff Met University/Archers Basketball club, Conkers, Drayton Manor, Moor Farm stables, National Space Centre, Skegness, Ten-pin bowling, Western-Super-Mare

Appendix 3: Types of activities included in the summer programme

Activities across the summer programme included the following: animation, archery, art master classes (creative journaling, floral watercolours, illustration skills, oil painting, street art murals) Aztec adventure, BBQ, badminton, basketball, bouncy castles, breakfasts, broadcasting, bushcraft and survival, chef academy, coding, circus skills, climbing, combat archery, cooking, crafts (tie dye, quilling, origami, gemtastic jewellery and fabric), creative journaling, cricket, dancing, drama, drawing, DJ-ing, fitness, football, forest school, fun days, giant board games, go- karting, Go-Ape, gadgets, gaming, gardening, gym, horse riding lessons, ice-skating lessons, inflatable air track, inflatable bungee, karaoke, lacrosse, laser tag, lego building, lava lamp making, MicLab (sustainable stations, stop motion animation, stitch in time, connections and innovations), movies, movie making, multi-activity clubs (crafts, sports, arts etc.), music workshops, netball, pantomime, performance (parkour, free running and contemporary dance), performing arts, photography, physical theatre, podcasting, pool, pottery, radio, rap, robotics, roller skating,rounders, rugby, singing, science, skateboarding lessons, stable management, sports day, stop-motion animation, swimming lessons, team building, tennis, trampolining, tree-top adventure, tug-of-war, The Wave, trips (Western Super Mare, Drayton Manor, Go-Ape, Cadbury World, Cardiff Met University, Conkers, Space Centre, Warwick Arts Centre etc.), ultimate frisbee, videography, water sports, watercolour/ink painting, zip wire and much more...

Agenda Item 6

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) Work Programme 2023-24

Last updated 12th December 2023

Please see page 2 onwards for background to items

6th July 2023
Service Overview and Priorities Apprenticeship Provision
5th October 2023
Attendance Behaviour and Exclusions Duties Ofsted Inspection Framework – including SEND
23rd November 2023
Social Worker recruitment and retention Cost of Children's Placements
21st December 2023
Holiday Activity Fund - Update Family Valued Programme – including Reunification Project
1st February 2024
Coventry Safeguarding Children's Partnership Annual Report One Strategic Plan - School Place Sufficiency
14th March 2024
Task and Finish Group – Autism in Schools
18 April 2024
Items for 2023-24
Family Health and Lifestyles Service – health inequalities Youth Provision in Coventry Fostering Early Years Saplings Programme Health and Wellbeing in Schools – joint with SB5
Items taken for information
Adoption Service Annual Reports

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) Work Programme 2023-24

Date	Title	Detail	Cabinet Member/ Lead Officer
6th July 2023	Service Overview and Priorities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Children's Services 	An opportunity for the Board to be briefed on the service areas under the scrutiny board portfolio	Neil Macdonald/Kirston Nelson Cllr Sandhu Cllr Seaman
	Apprenticeship Provision	An item referred from Scrucro to consider the range and quality of FE provision across the city, including apprenticeships but to also include work-based learning in schools, as well as opportunities for SEND pupils	Kirston Nelson Cllr Sandhu
5th October 2023	Attendance Behaviour and Exclusions Duties	To consider the implementation of the new duties around attendance, Behaviour and Exclusions	Kirston Nelson Cllr Sandhu
	Ofsted Inspection Framework – including SEND		
23rd November 2023	Social Worker recruitment and retention		Neil Macdonald Cllr Seaman
	Cost of Children's Placements	Referred from Scrucro to consider the financial pressures caused by the high cost of children's placements	Neil Macdonald Cllr Seaman
21st December 2023	Holiday Activity Fund - Update	Members requested a further update on the HAF following the last item.	Cllr Sandhu Rachael Sugars
	Family Valued Programme – including Reunification Project	To consider progress and impact on families of the programme, including the Reunification Project	Neil Macdonald Cllr Seaman
1st February 2024	Coventry Safeguarding Children's Partnership Annual Report	To include picking up the actions requested by the Board – widening work with faith groups, EDI strategy and work with children and young people	Rebekah Eaves Cllr Seaman Neil Macdonald
	One Strategic Plan - School Place Sufficiency	To look at the pressures on school places across the city and what the Council is doing to support sufficient places	Kirston Nelson Cllr Sandhu
14th March 2024	Task and Finish Group – Autism in Schools	Following a T&F group led by SB5, it was agreed that SB2 would undertake a T&F on the in-depth challenges	Jeannette Essex Cllr Sandhu

Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board (2) Work Programme 2023-24

Date	Title	Detail	Cabinet Member/ Lead Officer
		facing schools in providing support to children, young people and their families who are on the autism assessment pathway.	
18 April 2024			
Items for 2023-24			
	Family Health and Lifestyles Service – health inequalities	To looking in more detail at how the service is tackling health inequalities and targeting services at those in need on a localised basis.	Harbir Nagra Cllr Caan
	Youth Provision in Coventry	How and where we work with outside partners (and specifically the third sector) to deliver it	Neil Macdonald Cllr Seaman
	Fostering	Members requested a more in-depth report on Fostering, including recruiting and supporting foster carers from minority communities	
	Early Years Saplings Programme	Following a report on the Early Years Strategy, Members requested a further item including progress on and more detail on the Saplings Programme	
	Health and Wellbeing in Schools – joint with SB5	To look at what is being done to promote health and well-being in schools and universities – including the school nursing service	
Items taken for information	Adoption Service Annual Reports	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

Work Programme Decision Flow Chart

