

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 25 SEPTEMBER 2019

UPDATE ON THE ASSESSMENT PATHWAY FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WHO MAY HAVE AUTISM

Summary

1. The Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel will receive an on the assessment and diagnostic pathway for children and young people who it is considered are, or may be, on the autistic spectrum. This pathway is known in Worcestershire as the Umbrella Pathway.
2. Representatives from the Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust, Worcestershire's Clinical Commissioning Groups and the County Council have been invited to attend the meeting.

Background

3. Members will be aware of the Notice of Motion in respect of Diagnosis of Children with Autism which was agreed at Council in November 2017. Council agreed that the results of a review of the pathway being undertaken at the time should be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board (OSPB) and a report was presented to OSPB in February 2018.
4. A further update was provided to OSPB in May 2019. At this meeting Members were reminded that it was the service's aspiration to have a maximum wait time of 6 months and a business case was in development to achieve this. Following the discussion, OSPB agreed that:
 - Officers would follow up on what was currently provided to schools with regard to NICE guidelines to ensure accurate referrals and look into providing further written guidance if necessary.
 - The Business Case for the Umbrella Pathway would be brought to the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel as soon as it was available.
 - A further update would be brought to OSPB in 12 months' time.

Actions

5. Following the review of the Umbrella Pathway in 2018, changes were made to the referral process in order to ensure there was evidence of the graduated response (assess plan do review) within the education setting prior to referral to the Umbrella Pathway. A dip sample was undertaken by Babcock Prime which identified evidence of assessment but failed to show evidence of the plan to be implemented in an attempt to meet the child's needs. This demonstrates that opportunity may be being missed to meet the child's needs within the education setting.

6. Following implementation of actions from SEND Inspection (May 2018) new guidance is ready for publication and available for schools and health professionals regarding the Worcestershire Graduated Response. This will also be available via Worcestershire Local offer. This has been co-produced with families and will provide information for both professionals and families about what support can be expected from all statutory services.

7. Additional changes to the referral process to Umbrella Pathway are currently being implemented to ensure that there is sufficient information available at the time of referral to enable more timely decision making regarding the appropriateness for assessments and which are the most appropriate assessments according to the individual child or young person's presenting needs.

8. Funding to the sum of £100K has been allocated by the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) commissioners from Mental Health Investment Standards (MHIS) funding to address the backlog and ongoing demand for Umbrella Pathway assessments.

9. An additional separate £100K has been allocated for ongoing support as identified by families and carers during co-production events and reviews. This has been modelled to include a facilitator with lived experience to co-ordinate support packages that include integrated workshops, seminars and provision of advice. Professionals will participate in these sessions according to need. Additional individual interventions will be available for exceptional cases who do not currently receive support from commissioned services.

10. A Business Case has been prepared and presented to Commissioners within the CCG (Appendix 1). This was sent on 31 August 2019. Whilst this is considered, Worcestershire Health and Care Trust continue to use current resource as efficiently and effectively as possible.

11. In an attempt to reduce the overall waiting times a plan is in place for professionals to focus on diagnostic discussions. It is anticipated that unless there are any unforeseen circumstances approximately 130 children will be discussed in comparison to the usual 40-60 cases. Although this is not a sustainable action we are seeking options to support additional meetings going forward.

12. The Business Case proposes two key investment initiatives:

- a. Additional workforce to increase capacity.
- b. A new support model for children, young people and families following diagnosis or when a diagnosis is not identified but a child or young person experiences significant difficulties.

13. In addition to the above, the proposal includes opportunity to implement a model where Umbrella Pathway is commissioned as a standalone service in contrast to the current model where the workforce is embedded in individual professional teams and commissioned within current service specifications. This will ensure the pathway is prioritised and remove competing service demands. It will enable clearer monitoring.

14. The changes proposed within the Business Case support the feedback from the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board in May 2019, where significant concern was shared that the waiting times for children, young people and families has not improved and in some cases worsened since 2018.

Next steps

15. Ensure evidence of full graduated response is included in referrals with information from parents and schools. This will aim to reduce delays and will promote early intervention to meet the child's need. It will also ensure the assessment pathway is accessed appropriately.

16. Await confirmation and approval of the Business Case by CCG commissioners.

17. Recruit to additional workforce offering flexibility to the workforce for example rotational or shared roles.

18. Secure temporary staffing or additional hours worked by current staff to trial fast track assessments.

19. Identify children and young people who are less complex for 'one stop shop' day dual assessment with prompt diagnostic discussion.

20. Implement standalone Umbrella Pathway Team with specific service specification.

21. Monitor the impact of above on waiting times and other agreed key performance indicators (KPI's).

Purpose of the Meeting

22. The Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel is asked to:

- Consider the information in this report and the attached business case;
- Determine whether it would wish to carry out any further scrutiny; and
- Agree whether it would wish to make any comments to the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Children and Families.

Supporting Information

- Appendix 1 – Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust: Umbrella Pathway Business Case

Contact Point

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Head of Legal and Democratic Services) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

Agenda and minutes of Council on 9 November 2017

Agenda and minutes of Overview and Scrutiny Performance Board on 28 February 2018 and 24 May 2019

[All agendas and minutes are available on the Council's website here.](#)