

# **CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 22 SEPTEMBER 2021**

## **UPDATE ON 0-19 STARTING WELL SERVICES**

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### **Summary**

1. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Health and Wellbeing, the Director of Public Health and representatives from the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust have been invited to attend the meeting to provide an update on latest developments in relation to the 0-19 Prevention and Early Intervention Service (Starting Well).

### **Background**

2. In May 2019, the Director of Public Health provided the Panel with a report on the Service that was being commissioned. This was followed by a further update to the Panel in February 2020 by the service provider describing the service model and the service commenced 1 April 2020. Unfortunately, due to the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions, the service needed to flex and deliver some aspects differently and highlighted their response in an interim report to the panel in November 2020.

3. At the Panel meeting on 13 November 2020, it was agreed that:

- When evaluating the Henry half term hampers scheme, thought should be given to whether families had the necessary cooking skills in relation to the recipes provided;
- The number of Henry hampers provided in October half term would be provided to the Panel
- In the light of the recent Government announcement that funding would be provided for provision of Free School Meals in school holidays, care should be taken to ensure coordination between different agencies to provide a joined-up response;
- Further thought should be given to developing effective methods of evaluation of community projects in a joined-up way
- The Panel would receive a further update in 12 months including more details on the Council's quarterly performance monitoring processes

4. The Service has continued to flex and adapt the service model during the ongoing Covid response. This is a further update to highlight the activities of the service as they move into recovery phase.

5. A presentation to support this Report is attached at Appendix 1.

## **Developing the Service**

6. Due to Covid-19, the implementation of the Service has taken longer than planned, however, the Service has had robust recovery plans in place and the whole partnership has been following a 'roadmap to recovery'.

7. District teams - The development of cross-partner District teams are establishing and working well together. There is a Public Health Nurse Team Leader in each district that leads the teams alongside the Community and Parenting Manager for each district. Within these teams are a variety of Practitioners with a range of skills and expertise to support families with children aged 0-19 years.

8. The Trust has established a group of volunteers and peer supporters that support the team. Our volunteers complement the workforce and help us to engage families that have been previously difficult to engage.

9. The "Investing in Volunteers", UK quality standard for good practice in volunteer management, is followed by all partners ensuring good quality support and monitoring of volunteer input.

## **Delivery**

10. Specialist Public Health Nurses (Health Visitor or School Health Nurse) lead and deliver the Healthy Child Programme (HCP). The HCP is an evidence-based public health programme consisting of assessments at key points for children and young people. Once the assessments are completed, a package of support and opportunities is provided to the family. Many families need universal service provision that ensures they have the information and support to access services that communities provide for themselves, and that they are also supported by professionals at key times.

11. The Starting Well Specialist Public Health Nurse (Health Visitor or School Health Nurse) may allocate work to the wider team e.g., Parent Support Worker for parenting strategies, Community Nursery Nurse for sleep or weaning advice, Health Care Support Worker for healthy eating as a teenager or a Community Health Connector who can signpost to local groups/ organisations, supply information about free childcare in their community.

12. These teams have been delivering services by virtual platforms during the Covid-19 pandemic. Face to face contacts have now increased and are now usually the normal way of engaging with families. The Trust has listened to feedback from families and other stakeholders who have helped shape the current service delivery model. The Service will continue to offer a blended approach including offering some virtual delivery sessions. Examples of this are Breastfeeding Support sessions, Parenting sessions and some Looked after Children health assessments.

13. The partnership services are delivered within family homes, health clinics, Family Hubs (formally Children Centres), libraries, community venues. and schools will also be re-establishing their health services.

14. The Service has implemented Health Visiting bookable clinics within the Family Hubs, opportunities for families to self-weigh their babies within the hubs, virtual

Introduction to solid food sessions, virtual post-natal groups for those parents who had become isolated during covid and then continued to meet for pram walks in the parks etc. The Starting Well service together with Early Years settings have piloted the integrated 2-year reviews within Redditch and have now rolled these out across the County.

15. The pilot of the School Screener was completed earlier this year. Audio screening has continued for reception aged children and all safeguarding work has also continued. It should be noted there has been a significant increase recently in safeguarding referrals to the team.

16. The School Health Nursing Team have continued working alongside the Public Health Local Outbreak Response Team to provide a Covid Support telephone and email helpline for early years settings including nurseries and child minders and schools. This has been used to provide advice and guidance on safe and effective ways of working during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

17. Throughout this period, the Starting Well Partnership service has continued to experience workforce challenges. There is a nationally recognised shortage of registered Public Health Nurses and as a result there are plans in place to support additional training places locally to develop and grow our own workforce.

### **Supporting District needs**

18. A district profile is being developed which will be linked to health outcomes (e.g., smoking during pregnancy in Wyre Forest, school readiness in Redditch and the impact of rurality in some areas of the county and families ability to access provision). These will also encompass the Key Performance Indicator's for the Starting Well contract. From this profile a District Action Plan will be developed and the District Starting Well teams will work with other agencies to overcome challenges and barriers to meet the outcomes.

19. The Starting Well partnership including different organisations has facilitated many positive examples illustrating the benefits to families. For example, Action for Children's previous work with young people who identify as Transgender, have enabled them to develop and deliver two groups which run separately monthly and are open to all young people across Worcestershire:

- Trancakes – is a group for young people who identify as Transgender or gender questioning. This virtual group runs monthly, providing a safe space for young people to meet in an informal setting. Anticipated outcomes include young people feel more confident, know where to access support and to provide a support network for each other.
- Safe Space – is a monthly, virtual group, for parents and carers of young people identifying as transgender or gender questioning. It provides parents and carers an opportunity to talk about issues they may be experiencing. Anticipated outcomes include parents and carers develop additional communication skills to support their children, develop their own support network and know where to access further advice and guidance more effectively. The groups will meet face to face throughout the year for additional sessions/activities.

## Hampers for families

20. There were 295 food hampers provided in October half term.

21. Evaluation of the food hampers scheme was carried out and when families were asked how easy they found the recipes to follow, 99% said it was very easy. When families were asked if they would cook any of the recipes again 100% said they would and the main 3 meals they would cook again were cottage pie, spaghetti bolognese and the chicken stir fry. Comments from families can be seen below:

“thank you for putting us forward for the food hamper. I did not realise we’d get so much. Looking forward to trying the new recipes, it’s going to help us a lot with xxx losing his job”

“xxx (partner) tried to cook the tuna pasta bake, he said it was easy to follow the recipes and he never cooks!!”

“the kids have really enjoyed trying new recipes and not the same boring stuff. The stir fry went down well with xxx (eldest child) “

“it’s going to be a big help, especially this time of year, and we have had a really awful couple of years”

“yes please, I would love a hamper – it’s like winning the lottery”

22. The Community Health Connectors continue to work closely with partner agencies delivering the Ready Steady Worcs project to ensure coordination for future food hamper schemes. The evaluation tool used was different in each district. Going forward the Starting Well Service is planning to implement Community Outcome Star which is an evidenced based evaluation tool focused on measuring community outcomes. This will help to monitor progress and ensure consistency moving forward across the Districts.

## Information for families

23. The Service has developed a new website and social media platforms that provide information that parents frequently requested from team members. Some of these topics include sleep issues, support with bullying and information about community groups and activities. Parents are able to self-refer using the online referral form.

24. ChatHealth, a confidential texting service is well established within the service. It is available for all children aged 11-19 years. The Telephone Advice Service (TAS) is also well used by families wanting to talk to a Health Visitor.

## Challenges

25. Young and vulnerable mothers’ uptake for the Health Visiting Intensive Home Visiting provision has seen a reduction over the last year. Feedback has suggested that some young mothers received more support at home during lockdown and as a result have not felt the need for additional professional support. Other mothers

advised they were not interested in the Programme. The service is considering alternative provision to support parents so they can better prepare their children to be ready for nursery and school.

26. A further challenge has been that very few two-year-olds have taken up the offer of the 2-year integrated review between the Health Visiting service and the Early Years settings. Concerns have been raised by some Early Years providers regarding the low uptake of free childcare for 2-year-olds. The service has continued to promote access to free early years provision in response. There is a concern that with children not accessing early years provision will impact on their readiness for school over the coming years.

27. Young people and parents have been affected by the isolation and emotional impacts of Covid. The service has liaised with and referred individuals to other services such as the perinatal mental health team, community groups and low-level wellbeing provision. The school health nurses have continued to promote the use of the ChatHealth service in schools for the children and young people referred to them. Where access to schools has been possible, socially distanced drop-in clinics have been delivered.

28. There has been an increase in safeguarding strategy meetings since schools returned in February 2021 and a significant rise in June which appears to have continued in July as shown in Table 1. An increase in A&E notifications and Looked after Children can also be seen in Table 2 and 3.

**Table 1** shows the increase in safeguarding strategy meetings



**Table 2** shows the increase in the number of A&E notifications

Year	Amount of notifications	comments
2018	37,506	
2019	39,492	
2020	26,702	Covid
2021	19,206	Covid and data <b>as at end July 2021</b> (potential FYE if continues at this rate = 32,924)

**Table 3** shows the numbers of Looked After Worcestershire Children

Date	Number
06/08/2018	824
08/08/2019	816
02/08/2020	816
01/08/2021	882

## **Contract and Performance Management**

29. The Performance of the Starting Well contract is monitored quarterly by the Commercial Team in Worcestershire County Council. This meeting is attended by senior managers from the Trust in addition to the Deputy Director of Public Health and Council representatives to ensure improvement against targets and value for money.

## **Purpose of the Meeting**

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

- Consider the information in this report, including the impact and limitations on the roll out of the service model due to COVID-19;
- Determine whether it wishes to receive any further information or updates; and
- Agree whether it would wish to make any comments to the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Health and Wellbeing and the representatives from the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust.

## **Supporting Information**

Appendix 1 – presentation slides – Starting Well Partnership

## **Contact Points**

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## **Background Papers**

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance), the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

- [Agenda and Minutes of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel 10 May 2019](#)
- [Agenda and Minutes of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel 14 February 2020](#)
- [Agenda and Minutes of the Children and families Overview and Scrutiny Panel, 13 November 2020](#)

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