

People Scrutiny Commission

14 October 2019



Report of: Ann James, Service Director Care & Support, Children & Families

Title: Strengthening Families Programme – progress update

Ward: All

Officer Presenting Report: Ann James, Service Director Care & Support, Children & Families

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Recommendation:

To note the report.

The significant issues in the report are:

- Demonstrable progress since the previous report received by Scrutiny 18 October 2018.
- The programme has delivered on time, to budget and achieved the high level aims of reducing the children in care population and delivered a balanced budget in children's services for 2017-18 and 2018-19.
- The programme's intensive delivery phase concluded on 30 September.
- A controlled handover to the business to continue to embed change and ensure onward sustainability of financial and non-financial benefit is happening now.
- A Lessons Learned Workshop will take place later in the year.



1. Summary

The Strengthening Families Programme will close on schedule and to budget. The key aim of reducing our children in care population through the range of interventions that have been delivered with the investment secured has been achieved. This includes ... working earlier with families to keep children at home; a range of measures aimed at reducing teen entrants to care; reunifying children with their families; reducing social worker caseloads so they can focus on high quality impactful practices; securing investment to deliver a new model of children's homes in order to bring Bristol children home from out of authority placements, and much more. As a result, Bristol is one of only handful of local authorities to deliver a balanced budget (and deliver savings) in the country for the preceding two years.

2. Context

As with the national picture, Bristol's Children and Families Service has been experiencing significant budget pressures resulting from: demand in the system; rising weekly placement costs related to a dysfunctional market; and increasing complexity of issues, particularly within the teenage care population. Following the appointment of a new Service Director in May 2017, a series of management actions were implemented to tackle overspending budgets, addressing each area of pressure and these had some positive impact in the short-term.

It was recognised however, that the existing model of delivery did not allow for the pressures to be addressed over the longer term in a sustainable way and was not impacting on demand or enabling delivery of good outcomes for children and families living in Bristol. This was exacerbating challenges around demand pressures, increased costs and workforce instabilities. System-wide transformation was required to bring about sustainable change to focus on the root causes of demand underpinned by ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences); improve the partnership response to children and families in need of support; and enable us to deliver our vision and key outcomes.

The **Strengthening Families Programme** was Bristol's response to these combined challenges and ambitions. A system-wide programme of transformational change was developed, underpinned by a business case for investment, which set out to deliver substantial financial and non-financial benefits over a 5-year delivery period. The Programme received formal Cabinet approval and funding in April 2018, however, work on some transformational activity and early release of benefits pre-dates that.

A focus on ACEs and their impact on health and emotional wellbeing, harming behaviours, alcohol use, drug use, violence, sexual behaviour, incarceration, smoking, poor diet, leading to a higher than average use of health and social care services, underpins the direction of travel within the Strengthening Families programme.

The **vision** for children and families in Bristol is that they get the "right response, the right assessment, the right help, at the right time".

The **Statement of Intent** for the Programme is to make cost savings whilst holding the ambition of improving outcomes, commissioning and delivering quality services and keeping children and families at the heart of what we do.

- **We want the best** for Bristol’s children and young people and they are at the heart of everything we do.
- **We will help families** to achieve the change they want to see for themselves and their children
- **We believe** that children should live with their families or someone who knows them best.
- **We take action** when children need to be protected from harm.
- **We do everything we can** to make sure that the children in our care and care leavers are set up for life.

There are three¹ angles from which the programme approached the challenge:

1. **DEMAND** – tackling the number of children, young people and families that need our support and reducing the level of that need;
2. **SUPPLY** – how we organise our resources and commission in order to respond to that demand and, within that;
3. **WORKFORCE** – how we organise and support our staff to deliver the most effective and timely response to families.

The intensive delivery phase of the programme has now concluded (April 2018 to September 2019). There is, however, an onward benefit realisation period of 5 years extending through to 2023.

The full report detailing the achievements, challenges and closing position of the programme is available at Appendix A with Appendix B providing case studies of impact in each area of programme delivery.

3. Policy

Not applicable.

4. Consultation

a) Internal

Not applicable.

b) External

Not applicable.

5. Public Sector Equality Duties

- 5a) Before making a decision, section 149 Equality Act 2010 requires that each decision-maker considers the need to promote equality for persons with the following “protected

¹ A detailed explanation of each of the three challenges is contained within the Strengthening Families Full Business Case.

characteristics”: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation. Each decision-maker must, therefore, have due regard to the need to:

- i) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Equality Act 2010.
- ii) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to --
 - remove or minimise disadvantage suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic;
 - take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of people who do not share it (in relation to disabled people, this includes, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities);
 - encourage persons who share a protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.
- iii) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. This involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to –
 - tackle prejudice; and
 - promote understanding.

5b) An EqIA relevance check was completed for the programme when it was presented to Cabinet seeking approval and funding in April 2018. The result was that a full EqIA was not required for the programme and assessments would be undertaken at the individual project level as there was no evidence of combined or cumulative impacts arising from the proposals tabled..

Appendices:

Appendix A – Summary Report of Programme Closing Position

Appendix B – Case Studies

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

Background Papers:

None.