

# **West Cheshire Children's Trust Annual Report 2020-2021**

## **Vision**

The Vision for West Cheshire Children's Trust is that - **In West Cheshire we will work together to support families to keep children and young people happy, healthy and safe.**

## **Ownership**

The West Cheshire Children and Young People's Plan is the single overarching strategic plan for all services which directly support children and young people in the Borough. It shows how the local authority and all relevant partners will work collaboratively and in partnership to improve outcomes and the wellbeing of every child, young person and family in West Cheshire.

## **Our responsibilities include:**

- Developing, publishing and reviewing the Children and Young People's Plan.
- Outlining the strategic framework for how partners will co-operate to improve the wellbeing of children and young people in West Cheshire (West Cheshire Strategic Commissioning Framework).
- Monitoring the extent to which partners act collaboratively to deliver the Children and Young People's Plan.
- Work with the Cheshire West and Chester Safeguarding Children Partnership (SCP) to keep children and young people safe and protected.
- Work with and report to the Health and Wellbeing Board (HWBB) to ensure that priorities from the HWBB are reflected in the Children and Young People's Plan and to act as the delivery mechanism for those priorities reporting to the HWBB.

## **How the Plan is delivered**

### Structure

The West Cheshire Children's Trust structure comprises of the following:

**Children's Trust Executive** – The Executive is the decision-making body of the Trust. The Trust is responsible for managing the business processes of the Children's Trust and delivery of services in line with the agreed priorities.

**Children's Trust Strategy Groups** – The Strategy Groups are sub-groups of the Children's Trust and are accountable to the Children's Trust Executive. They are responsible for the development of integrated operational delivery, ensuring that services are delivered in line with the priorities and local needs identified within the Children and Young People's Plan.

## **Strategic Outcomes for 2020-2024**

The Children and Young People's Plan is based on evidence from past performance, needs assessments, and shaped through consultations with children, young people and professionals who work with them. The Strategic Outcomes and priorities going forward have been agreed with all partners. The Children and Young People's Plan sets a clear direction for the West Cheshire Children's Trust for a four-year period 2020-2024. The Trust has agreed the following strategic outcomes:

<b>Strategic Outcome</b>	
<b>1</b>	To promote and improve the emotional health and wellbeing of children, young people and their families. <b>(Emotional Health and Wellbeing).</b>
<b>2</b>	The needs of children with Special Educational Needs and Disability are met and that West Cheshire and Chester is a borough where all children and young people are included regardless of their need, background or vulnerability. <b>(SEND and Inclusion).</b>
<b>3</b>	To promote the development of children in the Early Years to ensure that they are ready for school. <b>(Early Years and School Readiness).</b>
<b>4</b>	Intervening in a joined-up way at the earliest possible stage to prevent needs increasing for children, young people and their families. <b>(Early Help and Prevention).</b>
<b>5</b>	To support our Children in Care and Care Leavers to enable them to achieve their full potential. <b>(Children in Care and Care Leavers).</b>

## **2020-2021 Annual Review of Strategic Outcomes – Progress Report**

Each Strategic Outcome has its own Strategy and Action Plan to deliver improved outcomes for children and young people. The Children’s Trust held a Development Session on 29 June 2021 to review each Strategic Outcome’s achievements and challenges and collectively agreed next steps. These are summarised below:

### **Strategic Outcome 1**

#### **To promote and improve the emotional health and wellbeing of children, young people and their families (Emotional Health and Wellbeing)**

**Lead: Cheryl Cooper (CCG)**

#### **Summary of Achievements**

- Cheshire & Wirral Partnership mobilised 24/7 Crisis Telephone Service (all-age). Children and Young People’s mental health surge planning response included provision of additional ‘Getting Help’ service provided by Healthbox – a community interest company providing additional support to children and young people who do not meet the CAMHS threshold.
- Children and Young People’s mental health services provided virtually during the pandemic.
- Cheshire West and Chester (CW&C) led a multi-agency partnership response enabling a greater focus on the emotional health and wellbeing needs of children and young people at a time of limited access to supportive relationships through educational settings and mental health services.
- Cheshire West and Chester (CW&C) Commissioned emotional health and wellbeing service POLARIS delivered face to face sessions to children and young people with only 3 cases escalating into statutory services. 970 one to one sessions were delivered to young people 163 sessions with parents and 659 consultations to professionals.
- Provision of Cheshire Mental Health Support Teams in schools, including Ellesmere Port (Wave 2) & Chester and Winsford (Wave 4).
- Kooth – online digital support service extended to all areas during Covid-19.
- MyHappyMind Programme provided online modules and offered a Covid-19 Programme to all schools free of charge.

## **Challenges**

- Rapid co-ordination of services and development of collaborative approaches to maintain support for children, young people and their families through the pandemic.
- Ensuring adequate emotional health and well-being support following lifting of first lockdown.
- Maintaining accessible services throughout 2020-21.
- Post lockdown increases in Eating Disorder presentations seen locally (schools/CAMHS).
- Post lockdown increases in children and young people exhibiting harmful sexual behaviour (Youth Justice Service – pan-Cheshire).
- Anticipated and realised increases in domestic violence and impact this is having on children and young people.
- Waiting times for ASC/ADHD assessments increased due to lockdown (Countess of Chester Hospital).
- Impact on Early Years children through missed experiences.

## **Looking Ahead and Next Steps**

- Extending Mental Health Support Teams in Schools.
- Aligning commissioning intentions and funding where there are opportunities for greater integration.
- Actions around CAMHS perceived waiting times and Tier 4 work – developing community support services to prevent going into Tier 4.
- Produce Plan on a Page for partners and own organisations outlining all services available, including who providing them, age range of service and how to access them.
- Focus on mental health provision for Looked After children/children in need.
- The changing system landscape – Integrated Care system; Place Based system; Provider collaboratives.

## **Strategic Outcome 2**

**The needs of children with Special Educational Needs and Disability are met and that West Cheshire and Chester is a borough where all children and young people are included regardless of their need, background or vulnerability. (SEND and Inclusion).**

**Lead: Debbie Freeman**

### **Summary of Achievements**

- Education Health and Care Needs assessments and Annual Reviews have continued during lockdown with flexible work practices introduced.
- 100% of secondary transfer amendments within timescales and 94% of Post 16 transfers within timescales.

- The local authority worked closely with educational settings, parents/carers and health colleagues to ensure all Reasonable Endeavours were made to support the SEND provision required within Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).
- School attendance of children and young people with an EHCP remained high during the pandemic.
- Wellbeing Education Return Programme: Child and Educational Psychology Service has offered training and follow-on supervision to all Emotional Health and Wellbeing Leads in CW&C schools and colleges and commissioned a service to provide counselling and family support to children and young people and their families concerned about the return to schools following lockdown.
- Additional bespoke training was provided to our Emotional Literacy Support Assistants to support children and young people experiencing bereavement.

### **Challenges**

- Due to the impact of Covid-19 there has been a significant reduction in face-to-face observations and assessments to support early identification. Autism Assessments have to be face-to-face without PPE therefore during covid, assessments were only partly undertaken increasing waiting times.
- The number of new statutory assessments has risen significantly, which together with the pressure on all services has meant that the timeliness of new assessments has been affected resulting in a reduction of EHCPs completed within the 20-week timeframes.
- The timeliness of amending EHCPs following annual reviews also needs to improve.
- The local authority has 10 special schools which are heavily subscribed and there is increasing pressure for independent and non-maintained settings which is putting significant pressure on the High Needs budget.

### **Looking Ahead and Next Steps**

- Improve the timeliness of new EHCPs to pre-covid levels and improve timeliness of amended plans following annual reviews – a growth bid to recruit additional staff to the SEN Team has been approved and posts have been advertised.
- To continue to implement the outcomes of the High Needs Review following delays due to Covid-19. This includes potential extension to special schools and specialist schools to address the demand for places – consultation in September 2021.
- Work closely with Health, Early Years Specialist Teaching Services and Educational Psychologists to ensure early identification of SEND and support.
- Other areas included in the SEND Action Plan include work on disability, transition - including Supported Internships and the wider approach to the Pathway to Independence - and to move the SALT Commission forward. Other areas include impending Inspection, aspiration for joint-commissioning and production of an Autism Strategy.
- Link strategic objectives within Emotional Health and Wellbeing and SEND strategies.
- Communications – continue to work with Settings, schools and the Parent Carer Forum.
- Summarise bids for monies from NHS England to support services such as waiting list initiatives

and hub project for Autism.

### **Strategic Outcome 3**

**To promote the development of children in the Early Years to ensure that they are ready for school. (Early Years and School Readiness).**

**Lead: Sarah Lister**

#### **Summary of Achievements**

- 100% settings, 99% childminders, 98% EYFS in schools good or better at last Ofsted inspection.
- Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) reforms roll out to all primary schools, settings and childminders. 83% attendance with good feedback.
- Provider Causing Concern Protocol has been sustained virtually with settings at risk of not getting a good outcome at their next Ofsted inspection.
- ELKLAN training promoting early communication continued virtually - third of settings now have communication champion.
- Transition document sent to all settings and schools to support emotional wellbeing of children.
- Children's Attainment through Leuvern Assessment (CALM) project has continued virtually with identified settings and schools with an aim to support improved outcomes for all vulnerable groups.

#### **Challenges**

- Early Years funding for 2, 3 and 4-year-olds – sustainability of businesses, challenges with furlough, 4 settings and 3 outstanding childminders have closed.
- IT challenges with some settings and childminders having difficulty accessing virtual training and briefings due to varying skills and software issues.
- Virtual visits do not enable the team to see a complete overview of entire setting in practice in the same way as meeting face to face.
- Children not being able to experience transition to new setting face to face.
- Statutory moderation data has been removed from the EYFS reforms and need to look at other ways to monitor progress of children and settings for example Case Studies.

#### **Looking Ahead and Next Steps**

- Continued roll out of Early Years Foundation Stage reforms.
- Training virtually/face to face for all early years providers – focus on emotional wellbeing of children and staff.
- Actions to continue to support language and communication, socialisation and attachment to prepare children for school.
- Other areas in the Early Years and School Readiness Action Plan include parenting support through Starting Well Service and Childcare Sufficiency Report. Other areas to firm up include ICON – how to support parents to manage crying babies and the changing specification of the

Healthy Weight Programme.

## **Strategic Outcome 4**

**Intervening in a joined-up way at the earliest possible stage to prevent needs increasing for children, young people and their families. (Early Help and Prevention).**

**Lead: Zara Woodcock**

### **Achievements**

- Despite the pandemic initiation of TAFs (Team Around the Family) has remained steady.
- TAFs routinely stepped down to agency led TAF from Children's Social Care.
- Further bid for Reducing Parental Conflict work has been submitted.
- Healthy Weight Pathway devised, and gap analysis completed.
- School Nurse role analysis completed by CWP/Public Health.
- Polaris contract targeting Emotional Health and Wellbeing extended – LA commissioning underpinned by Our Way of Working.
- Engagement and consultation for Youth Strategy completed.
- Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment completed; suite of domestic abuse e-learning training launched; Monkey Bob toolkit rolled out to Early Years settings to help early years children who have encountered domestic abuse open up when they are struggling with their feelings.

### **Challenges**

- Limited evidence of use of the Safeguarding Children Partnership (SCP) escalation process.
- Gap analysis has identified a range of Tier 1 prevention services but a lack of Tier 2 and 3 services for the Healthy Weight Pathway.
- The delay in the Domestic Abuse Act has resulted in some work having to pause.
- Emerging issues for children – Child Exploitation and Mental Health.

### **Looking Ahead and Next Steps**

- Harm Hidden from View – Covid-19 we have been presented with issues that have not been as prevalent before such as eating disorders.
- Response to drug and alcohol issues remain a priority.
- Consultation and implementation of Healthy Weight Pathway – partnership approach as Hospital Trust has been driving this forward, could result in commissioning ask.
- Preventative Approach to Sexual Health.
- Reduce number of admissions of Under 5s due to unintentional and deliberate injuries – re-visit running preventative campaigns e.g., button batteries.
- Produce Prevention Plan on a Page outlining all services available e.g., substance misuse and

self-harm, including who providing them, age range of service and how to access them – providing links to further information on the Live Well Cheshire West website.

## **Strategic Outcome 5**

### **To support our Children in Care (CiC) and Care Leavers to enable them to achieve their full potential. (Children in Care and Care Leavers).**

**Lead: Helen Brackenbury**

#### **Achievements**

- Virtual School reported that 30% of year 11 CiC achieved Grades 9-4 including English and maths, improving on previous year.
- Arden Children's Home opened – therapeutic ethos equips children to cope with returning to live in a family setting.
- Year on year increase in number of care leavers going to university (currently 21).
- Strong Staying Put Scheme (over 30 care leavers continue to live with ex-foster carers post 18).
- Build on the Local Offer to care leavers – introducing mobile phone scheme for 16+, free bus pass for care leavers 16–21-year-olds within the borough, retail discount card for 16–21-year-olds and pay council tax for care leavers living out of borough as well as those in borough.
- Placement stability maintained during Covid-19 – moves kept to a minimum and effective placement support to fragile placements given.
- IT initiatives during Covid resulted in CIC and Care Leavers having laptops and routers ensuring on a par with peers.

#### **Challenges**

- 10% increase in the number of children coming into care.
- Maintaining effective safeguarding practice and quality service delivery during Covid-19.
- Supporting CiC and Care Leavers to maintain their educational attainment whilst not receiving formal education during Covid-19.
- Maintaining meaningful contact between CiC and their family.
- Monitoring and supporting care leavers living independently who were at risk of hardship/isolation.
- Maintain the stability of the CIC and Care Leaver population – limited placement choice restricts appropriate matching of CiC to suitable placements. There is a need to increase placement choice in the borough.

#### **Looking Ahead and Next Steps**

- Extending Corporate Parenting Role - within the Council ensure all Directorates play an active part in being a proactive Corporate Parent and craft and develop a care leaver covenant.
- Care Leaver Covenant - Explore how our Statutory Partners and business community can also contribute to a care leaver covenant.



- Review and improve accommodation strategy for Care Leavers.
- 49% of Care Leavers are in Education, Employment and Training (EET) – work with businesses to increase opportunities for young people leaving care.
- Contextualised Safeguarding – criminal exploitation. Embed further multi-agency working to combat the risk of criminal exploitation (County Lines) of CIC and Care Leavers.
- Cross cutting issues of Children in Care and Care leavers for all Strategies and review how best to incorporate into other Action Plans.

## **Our Ways of Working and Commissioning**

**Our Way of Working** underpins ALL priorities and is about developing a common and consistent approach to working with families. Think Family underpins the values and principles of Our Way of Working and is underpinned by the Safeguarding Children Partnership ‘Think Family’ and is built upon a common and consistent approach to practice across the continuum of need. Our Way of Working is being driven forward by the Children’s Trust and is a transformational approach to strengthening culture and practice across the whole workforce for children, families and adults.

Our Way of Working underpins all the work of the Strategy Groups to ensure trauma informed practice is at the centre of service delivery.

**Commissioning** of services to deliver against the priorities is a key responsibility of the Trust and achievements include:

- Development of the All-Age Carers Strategy 2021-2026
- Development of the SEND Commissioning Strategy
- Successful recommission of SEND Mediation and Dispute Resolution Service
- Recommission of CRAIV – Children’s Rights Advocacy and Independent Visitors service
- Holiday Activity Fund

Polaris commission targeting emotional health and wellbeing

Further work will deliver the following area of progress in the coming period:

- Re-commission of Emotional Health and Wellbeing Services; and
- Refresh of the Joint Commissioning Framework to invigorate joint/alignment commissioning opportunities.

## **Summary of how the Next Steps will be Taken Forward**

The Children’s Trust Executive at its meeting on 19 July 2021 reviewed the achievements across the priorities of the Trust as demonstrated at the Development Session. The Trust agreed that the Strategic Outcomes would remain the same and agreed further actions for inclusion in the Action Plans of the individual Strategy Groups. The ownership of the Strategic Outcomes will remain with key partners. To monitor the progress of the Action Plans following the Development Session, Chairs of each Strategy Group will present a Highlight Report to the next meeting of the Trust Executive in November 2021; more detailed Spotlight reports will be scrutinised by future Executive meetings. It will be the responsibility of the partner agency chairing the Strategy Group to be accountable for performance and oversight of the priorities contained within the Strategic Outcome, reporting regularly to the Children’s Trust on progress made and escalating any issues.