

REPORT TO: Education Committee

MEETING DATE: 8 June 2021

BY: Executive Director for Education and Children's Services

SUBJECT: Improving Outcomes for Children and Young People – Mental Health, Family Support and Service Development

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide an update to Committee on the progress of mental health, family support and service developments to improve outcomes for children and young people across East Lothian.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to:
- i. Note the progress being made in supporting children and young people's mental health.
 - ii. Note the work underway to strengthen our family support offer.
 - iii. Note the aspects of service development and improvement as outlined in this report.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The integration of Education and Children's Services continues to present many opportunities for new ways of working and to further strengthen our support to our children, young people and families. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated our progress in a number of key areas and our recovery is dependent on the services that support children working together to mitigate the impact of the last year and to improve further our outcomes.
- 3.2 This report provides a summary of some of the key interventions that have been put in place in the last year and sets out work that is now well underway to transform our work and improve outcomes for all.

3.3 Update - Mental Health and Wellbeing

3.3.1 A number of key actions have been undertaken to improve the supports and interventions in place to enable early intervention for those children and young people that need Mental Health and Wellbeing (MHWB) support, within a 'tiered model' including:

- i. **School Counselling Service:** Funded by £317K from the Scottish Government, a school-based counselling service is now in place for children aged 10 and above. This service is delivered by MYPAS and to date 140 children and young people, across all schools, have been accepted for support. Remote drop-in sessions are in place. Additional funding has been accessed by MYPAS (e.g. Comic Relief and Children in Need) which is providing additional capacity to this service.
- ii. **Mental Health and Wellbeing Youth Work team:** With funding of £303K from the Scottish Government, six Mental Health Youth Workers are now in post and are working closely with all schools and staff to deliver a range of interventions and projects for children and young people aged 5-18 years. The youth workers are linked to an associated school group and aim to raise awareness and understanding of mental health and wellbeing and the importance of prevention and early intervention; support whole school policy and practice in schools to build capacity in pupils and staff to manage mental health and wellbeing concerns; coordinate and signpost pupils and staff to relevant support; and deliver targeted interventions to pupils requiring additional support for anxiety (e.g. Low Intensity Anxiety Management (LIAM)), resilience (e.g. Blooms resilience group work) and bereavement (e.g. Seasons for Growth).
- iii. **Single Point of Access:** A one door, single point of access is now in place to accept requests for assistance from professionals who have concerns about a child or young person's mental health and wellbeing. To date, 407 requests have been made to the Single Point of Access and those professionals have been provided with advice and support. Interventions and services accessed in this way include school counselling, LIAM, NHS art therapies, or support from a mental health youth worker, which is adapted to meet individual needs. Within the next few weeks, sessions with school staff and GPs to increase understanding of this new process, the services involved and how best to access them will be underway.
- iv. **Mental Health and Wellbeing pandemic grant funding:** Following receipt of a pandemic response grant of £220,500 from the Scottish Government to support interventions for children and young people impacted disproportionately from COVID-19. This funding was allocated to ten third sector partners to deliver a range of supports and interventions including, an S2 football engagement programme delivered by *Hibs Community Football Trust*, an S3 outdoor education programme delivered by *Venturing Out*, a family support and befriending programme delivered by *People Know How* and support

for care experienced children and young people through *Who Cares Scotland*. We are currently requesting feedback as to how this funding is being used and the impact that it is having on supporting children, young people and families.

- v. **Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework:** In 20/21 we were allocated £73K from the Scottish Government to support the development of a Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Framework. This was allocated to *Children 1st* to deliver a pilot mental health family support service. This service commenced in April 2021 and there are currently 7 families involved. In addition to this service, joint work is planned with CAMHS and GPs to ensure that children and young people are referred to the most appropriate service, at the right time and that the pathways are clear. Planning has also begun to support the particular needs of 16-18 year olds in the transition period, particularly those no longer in education. We received an allocation of £294K to develop and support the progression of the community framework and work is taking place to continue the progress made and identify gaps in service provision.

3.4 **Strengthening Family Resilience**

3.4.1 The **'Our Families'** project in Musselburgh East, working with the three primary schools of Pinkie St Peters, Wallyford and Whitecraig now has a full team in place consisting of a team leader, 3 family support workers, a money advice worker and employability worker. Thus far, the team has supported 34 families in the following areas:

- 14 Families with Income maximisation and money advice
- 27 Families with Family Wellbeing and support
- 8 Individuals with Employability support

Feedback from the schools and families involved indicates positive early impact of this multi-disciplinary approach on improving family resilience and children's engagement in learning. We will continue to monitor this carefully as a potential model for wider implementation should resources be available.

3.4.2 **Parenting and Family Support review:** An officer was seconded to undertake a review of the range of family and parenting support services. One of the key recommendations was that the council would benefit from a more strategic approach to the way in which we support parents, carers and families, ensuring an appropriate balance of universal, additional and targeted services are available to enable early intervention. A new post of Parenting and Family Support Co-ordinator has been created to take this work forward and will be in post by the end of May 2021.

3.4.3 The development of a **Parenting and Family Support Strategy** is now underway and a multi-agency group has been established to take forward Priority 2 from the Children's Services Plan by way of developing a strategy document and implementation plan.

3.5 Service development and integrated approaches

3.5.1 A number of priority work streams are underway to progress the further integration of education and children's services and to improve joint approaches to supporting all children and young people across East Lothian. These include:

- i. **Prevent and Return:** The first priority in the children's services development plan is to reduce the numbers of children in external residential placements. This includes more effective joint approaches to keep children "living and learning in East Lothian" and returning children and young people (where appropriate) who are in external placements to be supported in their own communities. A senior officer resource group (SORG) meets monthly to identify which young people need to be reviewed and what support is required for them to return / remain in East Lothian. Since the October 2019, 16 young people have returned to East Lothian from external residential placements. Developing appropriate support packages to facilitate is not cost-neutral and requires strong multi-agency working. Residential care placements are still required for some children with particularly challenging or complex needs.
- ii. **Virtual School Head Teacher (VSHT):** The post of a VSHT was established in 2019, funded by the Scottish Government Pupil Equity Fund for Care Experienced Children and Young People. The creation of this post has improved support for the wellbeing, learning and attainment of our care experienced young people through increased collaboration with Children's Services, the development and professional learning of a new network of Designated Managers for care experience in every school. The post-holder has also developed a range of focussed wellbeing and learning initiatives, which have increased inclusion and opportunities for care experienced young people to ensure good progress in their learning and attainment. A database of our care experienced young people is now in place and informs service delivery. Opportunities to listen to the voices of care experienced young people have been increased through self-directed support in relation to learning and through further development of younger Champs Groups in partnership with *Who Cares Scotland*. Alternative education programmes have been created with a small number of care experienced young people who have become disengaged from mainstream school. These programmes have been facilitated by local partners with funding coming from the SAC PEF Care Experienced budget. Almost all of those young people have achieved national qualifications, which have enabled them to move forward into positive destinations. The current VSHT will retire from her post in summer 2021. A new VSHT will be appointed and their priorities will be to develop further training in care experience for education staff, develop earlier interventions for care experienced primary children and lead on implementation of The Promise for educators to improve educational experiences and outcomes for East Lothian's care experienced young people.

- iii. **Children’s Services redesign:** The review is taking a systematic approach to understanding the experiences and impact of children’s services on the lives of vulnerable children and young people with the aim of strengthening joint working with education and other partners. Improving the capacity and quality of the “front door” into the social work service is a priority for change. Multi-disciplinary approaches that reach in to schools to support early and effective intervention and prevent crisis will be piloted and tested, making use of Scottish Government recovery funding. Other priorities include strengthening the integration of services supporting care leavers make a successful transition to adulthood.
- iv. **The Transforming Services for Children Programme:** The programme has the ambition to understand the totality of the resources available to support children and families across the council and the H&SCP. It will take a radical, whole system approach to designing and redesigning services in order to deliver targeted, effective services for children, young people and families.
- v. **The Promise Coordinator:** We received a grant of £50K from the Promise Partnership Fund to enable us to employ a Promise Implementation Officer. This person will be a champion of The Promise and responsible for ensuring the principles and themes are central to the redesign and change implementation process.

3.6 Conclusion

Despite the challenges of delivering core education and children’s services during the pandemic, this report demonstrates the continued commitment to improving the lives and experiences of children, young people and families through the development of new and integrated services. Whilst the long term impacts of COVID are not yet fully understood, it is essential that our services are able to meet the increased mental health needs of children and young people, and increased levels of parental and family stress and distress already evident. It is important to note that whilst we will evaluate the impact of our work to support future service planning, some of these developments are short-term and continued funding from Scottish Government is not guaranteed. We will continue to review our progress and looks towards developing sustainable solutions for the future.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 None

5 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 The subject of this report does not affect the wellbeing of the community or have a significant impact on equality, the environment or economy.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Financial - As referenced above, a number of these developments are being taken forward using short-term/grant funding streams. Whilst we are confident in targeting the priority areas required to improve outcomes and life chances of our children and families, evaluating the impact on service demand and sustainability will be essential for our long-term service planning.
- 6.2 Personnel – None
- 6.3 Other - None

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 None

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