



EDUCATION FOR LIFE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 5TH JUNE 2013

SUBJECT: EVALUATION OF THE CAERPHILLY FAMILIES FIRST PROGRAMME

REPORT BY: ACTING DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide an overview on the evaluation of the Families First Programme and the key findings.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Families First Programme aims to transform services for families at risk of, or experiencing poverty, and who are vulnerable to escalating problems. Key to the Programme is the establishment of integrated service responses for families (Team Around the Family) and joined up approaches to sharing information that support easy access for families to the support they need (Joint Assessment Family Framework). Families First is a key element of Welsh Government's focus on reducing child poverty. The funding allocation to Caerphilly borough during 2012/2013 was approximately £3m.
- 2.2 A total of 10 projects have been commissioned through a range of organisations by the Children and Young People's Partnership (CYPP) following the Local Authority's procurement procedures. Each project comprises of 2 or more organisations in order to encourage partnership working. All projects are developed as a programme and fully embed the Families First principles and deliver outcomes for children, young people and families in the borough. The projects are subject to robust performance management measures and accountability is maintained through day-to-day contract management, which is in addition to scrutiny through the CYPP Priority Outcome Groups and the CYPP Board (see appendix 1 for an overview of the projects).

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 The Caerphilly Families First Action Plan 2011 – 2017.

4. THE REPORT

- 4.1 The Families First Programme initially commenced in November 2011 and currently comprises 10 projects. The CYPP commissioned an independent evaluation of the Families First Programme based upon 8 of the projects, which had been operating at least over a year in order to identify good practice and value for money, and to inform future commissioning requirements and options. The successful tender was awarded to Cordis Bright.

- 4.2 The evaluation was undertaken and concluded in March 2013 and provided the opportunity for all key stakeholders to be involved. This included project staff, practitioners, children and young people, families and parents/carers. Over 200 engaged and participated in the Evaluation.
- 4.3 A range of methodology was adopted which included the use of interviews and focus groups and also an online survey (with projects where possible making this available to those who may not have digital access).
- 4.4 The substantial performance management information that had been collated through the contract management of monitoring the projects was also interpreted during the evaluation, and was utilised to inform the process.
- 4.5 In summary the evaluation comprised 2 broad elements; a focus on the programme level and on the 8 projects, in order to establish an initial picture of the extent to which the following are effectively embedded and making a difference for families:
- Strategic arrangements.
 - Team Around the Family (TAF).
 - Work with families with disabled children across the programme.
 - Partnership workings and practitioner skills and confidence.
 - Value for money.
 - The impact for children, young people and families.

From the findings there was also the identification of key lessons learnt for improvement and recommendations for future development.

- 4.6 Some key strategic findings include:
- The aims and objectives of the programme are clear and informed the needs led commissioning.
 - Key areas of strategic service redesign are the “single front door” for referrals, the TAF model, a greater “whole family focus in service delivery, including families with disabled children, and innovative partnership models driven by the commissioning process.
 - Enhanced partnership working and information sharing particularly between the projects and joint working with Flying Start and Communities First.
 - Quality outcomes targets are being surpassed, often by substantial amounts by the majority of projects (evidenced on the Results Based Accountability scorecards used by projects).
 - Possible benefit in developing annual contract reviews which permit assessments of targets and service specifications in light of lessons learnt through working with families, however, this would be subject to the current Local Authority tender processes.
 - An initial picture shows most projects are more cost efficient than anticipated.
 - Some outcomes assist with reducing avoidable costs by preventing need escalation and reducing NEETs (Not in Education, Employment and Training).
- 4.7 In terms of some of the key findings in relation to the individual projects, these are mostly specific to that particular project, and acknowledge the strengths as well as areas for development. These will be progressed with the projects through the contract management processes in place. A feedback event that recently took place for all projects and practitioners, which had over 70 attendees, included a presentation on the individual project findings and areas for development (see appendix 2).

However, overall one of the key findings is that the programme is a “high confidence programme” which delivers positive outcomes, and that there is a very strong family involvement in service design and developments, both in person-centred approaches to their own support, and in providing feedback on how services can more generally development. It was recognised that across all projects there were a range of approaches to support this.

4.8 The Evaluation report will be available later this month and made accessible on the Council's website. Action plans will be developed and the strategic recommendations will be considered and implemented by the CYPP. Recommendations for the individual projects will be implemented through the existing performance mechanisms in place as part of the contract management.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

5.1 All tender specifications for the projects noted above, included a commitment to comply with Equalities and Welsh language issues in accordance with the Council's own adopted schemes.

5.2 No specific impact assessment has been undertaken; however, equalities issues and language issues are a clear thread throughout each project, especially disability-related requirements.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no financial implications associated with the report.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no personnel implications associated with the report.

8. CONSULTATIONS

8.1 The evaluation incorporated consultations with members of the CYPP Board and practitioners, project managers and practitioners, CYPP Central Support Team, children and young people, parents/ carers and families.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 That Scrutiny Committee note the findings of the evaluation and progress made by the Families First programme.

10. STATUTORY POWER

10.1 Children Act 2004 including the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010 (Section 2: Child Poverty Strategy discharged through the CYP Plan 2011 – 2014).

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Appendices:

Appendix 1 Overview of Families First Projects
Appendix 2 Presentation made by Cordis Bright