

Education & Children's Services Scrutiny Committee 23.12.21

Support for Families In Carmarthenshire

Introduction

The Family Support Strategy 2018-23 ([Cymraeg](#) / [English](#)) sets out the context and strategic vision of 'how we support families in Carmarthenshire'. The Strategy sets out the purpose, aims and guiding principles of the work, covers a description of the broad range of services available across the different levels of need and finally covers how we seek to achieve our aims by ensuring that the various services work to complement one another in order to meet the needs of families in the County.

This report will focus on the main preventative programmes of Families First, Flying Start and the Early Years Integration work, and cover the following:

- Details of current services being delivered
- Trends – current compared to previous demands
- Information regarding WG additional funding and implications
- Challenges faced
- Future delivery/innovation

Other linked key areas of work

Whilst the focus of this report is the tackling poverty, preventative programmes it is important to highlight the close links and inter dependent working relationship with the Childcare, Play and Family Information work within the Service Area. Staff work collaboratively across the Programmes and this has been particularly evident in managing the additional pressures during Covid. The following are examples of the interdependency across services;

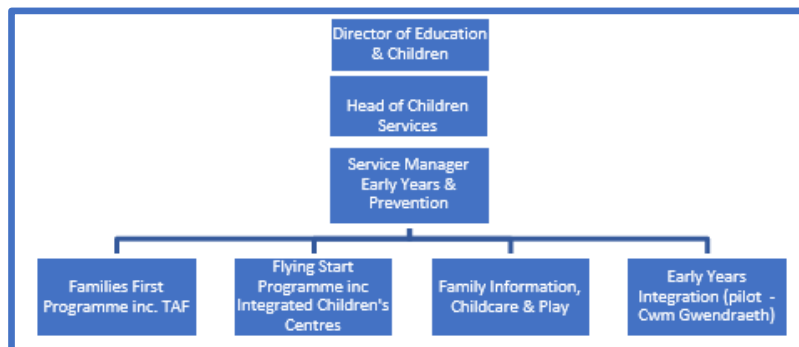
Family Information Service - will be used extensively by all Programmes and services to communicate with the target population and publicise services

Play work- the additional £639,156 WG covid funding – 'Summer of Fun' & 'Winter of Wellbeing' will have targeted disadvantaged children and young people via the preventative programmes.

Childcare - whilst Universal in terms of access, it is an extremely important service for tackling poverty and disadvantage - supporting families both in terms of those in work and those not in work.

The service area covers a broad range of Family Support services from Universal, right up to the threshold where statutory Social Workers become involved. Indeed one of the main reasons for the existence of the whole service is to prevent the need for statutory social care involvement in the lives of children, young people and families wherever and whenever this is possible and safe to do so.

Structure



Levels of Support- the Windscreen



This diagram sets out levels of support across the spectrum from Universal to Protective support. The early intervention, prevention programmes work primarily within the Enhanced and Targeted support tiers of the spectrum. The statutory services provide support at the Assessment for Care and Support and the Protective end of the spectrum. We have clear step up/down policies and processes that cover this important interface and staff have developed close working relationships to ensure that families receive the right help in a timely manner by the appropriate service.

It is acknowledged that families will naturally move back and forth across the spectrum at different times and stages according to life challenges. This highlights the importance of good communication across the spectrum and that information sharing and collaborative working is key. The regular multi agency project manager and alignment group meetings, support this objective.

A regional Cysur threshold document 'Right Help, Right Time' ([Cymraeg](#) / [English](#)) sets out the model and illustrates the types of support services available at the various levels of need.

Families First Programme

Families First is a Welsh Government programme funded via the annual Children and Communities Grant.

Grant received for 20/21 - £1.9 million.

The programme is aimed at providing early, preventative support to children, families and young people across the county who require help, advice, and support below the statutory threshold.

The programme is comprised of three key elements:

1. Team Around the Family model and implementation of the Joint Assessment Family Framework (JAFF)
2. Commissioned projects i) Parenting Support ii) Support for young people
3. Disability Support

Team Around the Family

Team Around the Family (TAF) and the Joint Assessment Family Framework (JAFF) underpin Families First. TAF is a collaborative way of working that brings a number of agencies together to deliver a plan of support to a family, child or young person. A TAF Key Worker will take the lead role in working with families to ensure that services are coordinated and meet the family's needs.

The JAFF is an assessment tool used with families to identify their strengths and plan what needs to happen to help families meet their identified needs.

Commissioned projects

There are ten Families First projects in total, five are delivered by the Local Authority, four by third sector projects and one by the Health Board. They provide support on a variety of needs including, parenting support to manage children's behaviour, support parents and child/young person's emotional/mental health needs and support to better manage conflicts in relationships.

Projects are currently offering virtual and face to face support in a variety of settings families home (based on need), in offices, schools and outdoors. Projects are looking to secure larger community venues in order to support more families as some of the Families Centres are limited for space and outdoor sessions are not possible during the winter months for families with babies and younger children.

Project	Services offered
1. Family Centres (3 rd Sector) £86,691 p.a	Network of eight Family Centres and two groups across the County to support families with children aged 0-11 with the challenges of family life, by increasing parents' confidence and skills in providing positive learning opportunities and encouraging parents to play with their child to support their cognitive, social and language development.
2. Integrated Children's Centres (CCC) £75,156 p.a	Integrated Children's Centres in Morfa, Felinfoel and Llwynhendy. Early Years activities for families with children aged 0-3 years including Stay & Play sessions, Language & Play, baby massage, after school play clubs for children aged 4- 11years, open access play and family play sessions and healthy lifestyle activities such as health eating, cooking on a budget, confidence building and parenting courses.
3. Action For Children (3 rd Sector) £220,000 p.a	Evidence based Parenting Programmes in a group setting or 1:1 (e.g. Handling Children's Behaviour, Family Links Nurture Programme (3-11 years), TAKE 3 (13-16 years). Family Therapist offers support individual family members and whole families. Play Therapist works with children aged 3-11 years and provides a developmentally appropriate way for a child to process their experiences and feelings.
4. Home-Start Cymru (3 rd Sector) £137,500 p.a	Recruits, trains, supports and supervises volunteers with parenting experience who provide practical and emotional support to families with children aged 0-16 to promote positive relationships and attachments, increase parenting skills and confidence e.g establishing routines, encouraging play/homework.
5. Domestic Abuse Stops Here (3 rd Sector) £50,000 p.a	Support for children and young people aged 0-16 affected by domestic abuse through 1:1 or group sessions via CDAS (Carmarthen), Threshold (Llanelli) and Calan (Amman Valley). Help for children and young people around understanding emotions, self - esteem, safety planning and healthy relationships.
6. Youth Health Team (HDUHB)	Direct early intervention support for young people aged 11-25 identified through JAFF assessments or who are vulnerable i.e. those not in mainstream education or who are NEET.

£58,755	Support for young people and their families with specific health needs e.g. anxiety, depression, self-harm, negative or unhelpful thinking patterns, sexually inappropriate and harmful behaviour.
7. Family Support in Schools (CCC) £190,545 p.a	Works with the Central TAF Team. Family Support in Schools support school staff and families with children aged 3-11, identified by the Central TAF team by providing early advice and support to families related to their needs e.g. behaviour, parenting, bereavement, positive play, attendance.
8. Tim Camau Bach (CCC) £220,000 p.a	Supports families with a disabled child aged 0- 16 years through home based support e.g. sleep, continence, behaviour, diet, play, child development and sibling support, group parenting learning and groups for young people (10-16 years) with high functioning autism, Asperger's, ADHD, social /communication difficulties.
9. School Based Youth Work (CCC) £422,333 p.a	Supports vulnerable young people aged 10 – 18 and their parents/carers with issues around: Behaviour through parenting courses, Talking Teens and Take 3 parenting, relationships support via the STAR programme and support regarding transition periods, peer pressure, health/sexual health and education. The youth workers are based in secondary schools across the County.
10. Post 16 Youth Work (CCC) £122,070 p.a	Supports vulnerable young people aged 16-25 and their families who may require a TAF to help build resilience and promote education, employment, training & volunteering opportunities

Trend Data for the Families First programme:

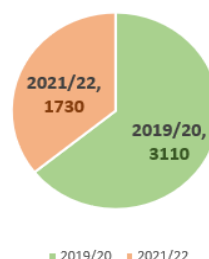
Covid guidance to limit social interaction has had a significant impact on the delivery of the service, particularly limiting activities that involved group delivery. In general, we have seen a reduction in activity across the Families First programme . There are several reasons for this reduction; it took time to establish the new, 'virtual' way of working, parents declining virtual support until face-to-face support could be offered, staff sickness/vacant posts. Group support ended and families/young people were being supported on a one-to-one basis. Project Managers reported that of the families that did access the service, their needs have become more complex requiring longer periods of support. Interestingly, there has been an overall improvement in outcomes for those families, as reported via the distance travelled tool from 75% positive forward movement to 83% during the period.

Referrals into Families First
2019/20 - 3110 referrals
2020/21 - 1730 referrals.

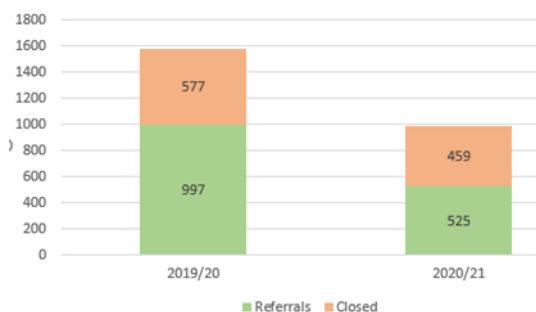
44% reduction in referrals.

The main source were self-made referrals consistent with previous years.

Families First Referrals



Families First - Single Agency Jaff Assessments



JAFF Assessments

JAFFs undertaken 20/21 - 525

JAFFs undertaken 19/20 - 997

53% reduction in the number of assessments however, there was a positive increase in the distance travelled scores:

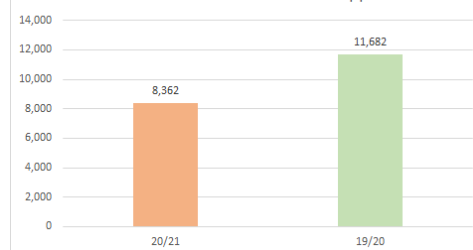
Cases Closed 20/21 - 459 (83% forward movement)

Closed cases 19-20 - 577 (75% forward movement)

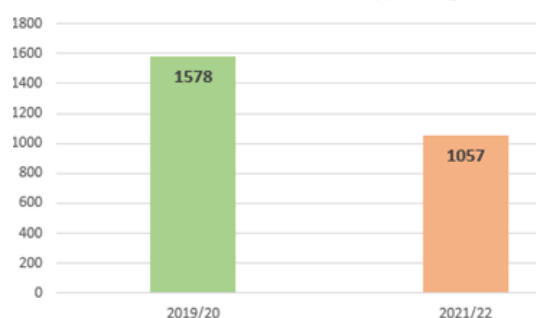
No of individuals supported
20/21 - 8,362
19/20 - 11,682

28% reduction, group support stopped during lockdown so we were unable to reach the same numbers of individuals.

Families First: No. of Individuals Supported



Families First Referrals to Support Agencies



Referrals to other Agencies

2020-21 - 1057 referrals made

2019-20 - 1578 referrals made

A 33% reduction, projects mainly referred families to foodbanks and other third sector organisations for on-going, consistent with previous years

Cases stepped up to Children's Services
20/21 - 23
19/20 - 18
Increase of 22%

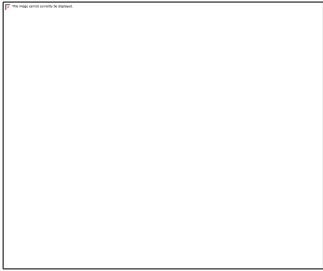




Cases stepped down to Families First from Children's Services
20/21 - 66
19/20 - 82
decrease of 22%



The number cases stepped up and down from children's services are low which is expected and appropriate. This data has been scrutinised in detail and both statutory and preventative service managers are satisfied that the transfer of cases was appropriate.

Trend Data for Team Around the Family (TAF)

	<p>Referrals to TAF Allocation</p> <p>2020/21 - 399 referrals into TAF allocation 2019/20 - 646 referrals into TAF allocation</p> <p>reduction of 38%.</p> <p>In 2020/21 primary schools were the main referral from source, consistent with previous years.</p>
<p>Presenting Needs</p> <p>2019/20 the highest presenting needs were</p> <p>Challenging children's behaviour</p> <p>mental health of the child</p> <p>mental health of the adult, this was consistent in 2020/21</p>	
	<p>Referrals made to Other Agencies</p> <p>2020/21 - 304 referrals to other agencies 2019/20 - 508 referrals to other agencies</p> <p>reduction of 40%</p> <p>TAF mainly referred on to Families First projects for support consistent in previous years</p>

Families First: Impact and challenges of Covid-19 pandemic

- Offices closed, staff were instructed to work from home, open access community-based venues closed, drop-ins' sessions, home visits stopped.

- Covid guidelines had to be adhere to, which not only generated its own challenges it also commanded a new way of working using virtual support. Some staff required additional IT equipment.
- Staff and families having to acquire a greater skill and understanding of how to operate virtual platforms. Projects quickly adapted to providing support via telephone, Teams and used a variety of platforms such as Facebook messenger and WhatsApp to provide support to families/young people.
- Staff developed a variety of innovative methods to engage families during lockdown such as creating and delivering activity packs, dropping off food parcels for on-line cooking courses, developing their own pre-recorded videos for families to access.
- Difficult to assess the full needs of a family virtually.
- For some family's preference being face to face support (feedback via our Families First on-line snap survey questionnaire)
- Staff and families contracting Covid, self-isolating, shielding.
- Education establishments closing, and school closures for those families with disabled children
- Staffing capacity within the Families First projects, vacant posts and challenges recruiting to them.
- Staff were re-directed to support with the school hub arrangements and childcare (C-CAS) arrangements for vulnerable families and Key Workers.
- Projects reported that families are facing economic struggles, poor emotional and mental health, poor relationships and require support with managing children's behaviour. During lockdown, families identified that they were missing support from their communities, friends, and relatives. Young children have experienced setbacks in their development particularly regarding their speech language and communication skills.
- Families First saw an increased in demand for two projects, Tim Camau Bach (Disability support) and DASH (Domestic Abuse Support). The Post 16 youth workers experienced a significant increase in referrals at the end of the Summer Term for support for Year 11 leavers. The School Based Youth Workers have reported that they have received referrals for new students and schools with part time youth workers have requested more youth work time. There is also more demand for therapeutic support to support more complex cases.

Positives taken from the global Covid-19 pandemic:

- The Families First programmes have adapted well, introduced new processes and systems and are now delivering a blended service, to meet the need of their service users.
- Support can be offered to a greater number of families if delivered virtually because staff do not have to spend time travelling.
- Utilising a plethora of virtual methods to deliver support, training, workshops and pre-recorded videos to families.

Flying Start Programme

Flying Start was introduced in 2007 and is regarded by the Welsh Government as one of its flagship programmes. It is a multi-agency programme and received a sum of £3.8 million for 20/21 via the annual Children and Communities Grant. It is an Early Years, targeted programme for families with children under 4 years of age in some of the most disadvantaged areas of Wales.

Flying Start is delivered within defined postcodes, across 18 geographical areas of Carmarthenshire:

- Llanelli: Bigyn, Morfa, Lakefield, Felinfoel, Dafen, Llwynhendy and Pwll,
- Outer Llanelli: Pembrey, Bury Port, Carway and Trimsaran,
- Ammanford: Betws, Ammanford Town, Pantyffynnon, Garnant and Glanamman,
- Carmarthen: Richmond Park and Carmarthen Town.

The core elements of the programme are drawn from a range of options that have been shown to influence positive outcomes for children and their families to include:

- Funded, quality, part-time childcare for 2-3 year olds;
- An enhanced health visiting service;
- Access to parenting support; and
- Speech language and communication

Flying Start Service Strand	Services delivered in Flying Start
1. Funded, quality, part-time childcare for 2-3 year olds	The provision of high quality, part-time childcare for 2–3-year-olds is integral to the Flying Start programme. Quality childcare contributes to the acquisition of skills such as socialisation and the ability to play and concentrate. Childcare is fully operational in 26 settings providing 12½ hours, which is delivered over 5 days. Children with additional needs are provided with one-to-one support in the settings when required. Flying Start are also utilising additional monies for children under 2 years of age with developmental delays to access childcare for 2 x 5 hours per week.
2. An enhanced health visiting service	<p>The Flying Start health programme is central to the delivery of a progressive, universal service, offering a range of preventative and early interventions. Health visiting has returned to home visits for all families and have also set up clinics in some of the areas in Integrated Children's Centres.</p> <p>The midwifery team provide specialist intensive support to antenatal/postnatal parents, with additional complex health and social needs. They are delivering courses virtually as the parents are engaging more and also some are being supported individually, face to face.</p> <p>The social care team support all services, ensuring that the most vulnerable families have access to bespoke packages of care and support on identified needs within the family. They will work in collaboration with the health visitors in promoting resilience and independence.</p>

3. Access to parenting support

The parenting service deliver a range of formal and informal structured parenting courses along with bespoke packages of care. The parenting team have moved their services to hybrid delivery to ensure families are accessing group parenting support and some face-to-face contact where required.

Support officers delivering Come & Cook courses, with staff taking healthy meal ingredient boxes to families and then providing live video sessions for families to join and utilise the ingredients to create healthy family meals.

4. Speech language & communication

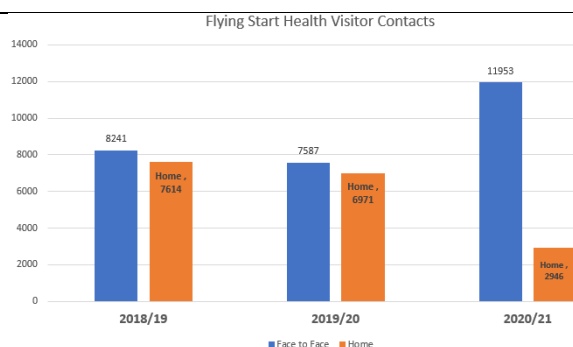
The speech and language therapy team support the needs of children and their families they work within a tiered service delivery model of universal, targeted and specialist provision. Services are designed to be in alignment with the aims of the Welsh Government Talk with Me: Speech, Language and Communication Plan 2020-2022.

Language and play are delivering courses with face-to-face sessions in smaller groups, this is mainly due to venue capacity.

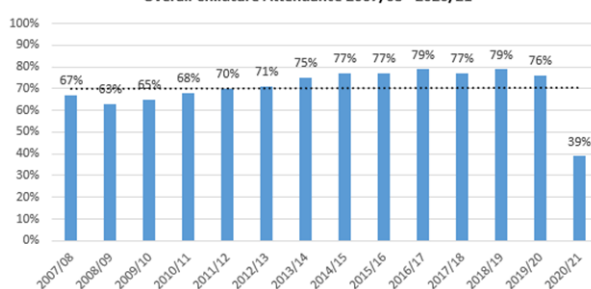
The Flying Start APP has been integral to the service over Covid. It is currently being utilised to inform parents of what is being delivered and what is accessible to the families in the eligible areas. It provides notifications, key messages for health, speech and language, disseminating information at the touch of a button. It is also being utilised to signpost families to other support services.

FLYING START TRENDS

Flying Start health visitors report face to face contacts. During Covid the types of contacts reported changed to incorporate agreed alternative contact methods such as telephone, email and video conferencing. This has increased the contacts by 66% but the home contacts have reduced by 40%.



Flying Start Carmarthenshire
Overall Childcare Attendance 2007/08 - 2020/21



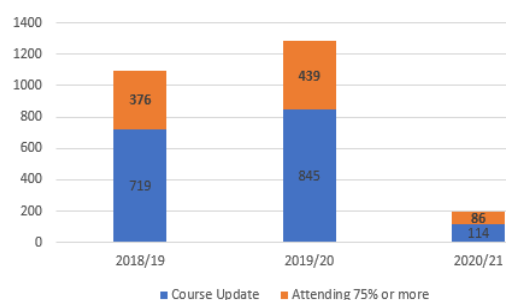
Flying Start Childcare continued through Covid in most settings across the 18 areas.

There is a significant drop identified in overall attendance during 2020/21. With a previous average of 73% we witnessed a drop to 39% attendance in 2020/21. Early indications in the first seven months show good recovery with attendance at 73% for the period.

Flying Start moved the delivery of parenting courses virtually during covid. Parenting courses were delivered on a one-to-one basis for the main part of the year and smaller virtual groups were established at a later stage. groups were held.

Although there were few courses delivered attendance of 75% of the course improved from 52% to 75%.

Flying Start Course Take up & Attendance



Flying Start: Impact and challenges of Covid-19 pandemic

- IT equipment, sourcing, training to ensure all staff up and running
- Working from home and managing children at home
- Multi-disciplinary team, varied organisational covid guidance/restrictions
- Limited numbers able to work from the offices
- Staff missing office conversations/discussions regarding families which can generate referrals within FS/partner agencies.
- The health visitors struggling with new electronic health recording system, WCCIS
- Childcare, keeping staffing ratios to enable continued delivery
- Retaining staffing levels, recruiting into childcare sector particularly difficult
- Maintaining childcare attendance levels
- Venue capacity with social distancing in place, difficult to deliver face-to-face

Positives of delivery during Covid-19 pandemic:

- Team now fully digitalised to provide seamless services
- Childcare service providers all trained and able to utilise Microsoft Teams
- The Flying Start App – providing vital information and key messages to families
- Working with different partners e.g., undertook delivery of activity boxes to families with Dyfed Powys Police
- Services now delivering hybrid courses across Flying Start where appropriate
- Health visitor clinics operational with online booking system
- Childcare- introduction of homework packs when children unable to attend
- Childcare- incentives to promote attendance
- Childcare -uploading activity videos for families
- Come & Cook, delivering ingredients boxes, then providing live video sessions
- Ed. psychologist advice and support to health visitors and childcare
- Speech & Language team supporting and upskilling childcare staff

Early Years Transformation

Carmarthenshire County Council are working in partnership with Hywel Dda University Health Board (HDUHB), Ceredigion County Council and Pembrokeshire County Council in response to Welsh Government's Early Years Integration Transformation Programme. This programme focuses on the need for a 'joined up and responsive early years service to ensure that every child has the best start in life'.

➤ Cwm Gwendraeth Early Years Team

As part of the transformation programme, we are required to test and pilot innovative ways of working and as a result in Carmarthenshire we have worked closely with HDUHB in developing a pilot Early Years Integrated Team in Cwm Gwendraeth. This is a multi-disciplinary team of:

- Health professionals (Midwives, Health Visitors and Speech and Language Therapists)
- Local Authority professionals (Family Support Officers and a Community Connector).
- The team is led by an Early Years Integration Co-ordinator and the systems for the team are developed and monitored by a Performance and Finance officer, of which both are HDUHB employees.

The team has been developed utilising the good practice learnt from the delivery of the multi agency national Flying Start Programme.

➤ The work of the team:

The work of the team centres around the emerging needs within the community and applies a strengths-based model of working with families and the wider community. The Team actively seek out and work with third sector organisations to create, enhance and increase family support services in direct response to the needs of families.

How are needs identified?

- Parental insight work via external consultancy (Arad)
- Ongoing conversations with families and professionals
- Population indicators/data

The needs of parents in Cwm Gwendraeth:

- Improved access to information about services
- Improved access into services (to include physical access due to rurality and lack of transport)
- Access to Welsh language/ bilingual services
- The right support at the right time
- Smooth transitions through services

- 'We only want to tell our story once'
- Effective information sharing across services

Emerging needs as a result of COVID-19:

- Feelings of isolation
- Anxiety
- New mums are feeling they have missed out on important opportunities to meet other new mums - peer support and relationships
- Child development – Speech, language and communication; Fine and Gross motor skill development; social and emotional development

Responding to these needs:

- Scoped and mapped the Cwm Gwendraeth area to identify service provision for families and developed programmes to address the gaps in partnership with third sector partners
- Developed a webpage that sits within the Family Information Service website and includes local information, opportunities to book onto groups, hints and tips, timetables of clinics etc
- Working with Save the Children to test innovative ways of parental engagement in the transition into school process. 10 schools participating in the pilot, three of which in Cwm Gwendraeth.
- Working with education, childcare settings and health services to pilot a new transition form for school entry for all children, with an extra section for children with additional learning needs
- During lockdown the team facilitated outside walking groups (between 8 and 15 families), virtual singing groups (12-24 parents at any one time), Birth – 6 months and 6 months on virtual cuppa group (between 6-10 per group).
- Currently the team is working with third sector organisations in increasing their capacity and introducing them to the Cwm Gwendraeth area such as Employment support in Cefneithin and Pontyates; mental health support via MIND and the local Social Prescribers.
- Time to Shine Projects and Music and Movement Groups to address the developmental delay in children in partnership with Menter Iaith, Actif and Homestart.
- Pre- school settings received support from the Speech and Language therapist to ensure the settings are effectively addressing the speech, language and communication needs of the children
- Speech and Language Therapist delivered 'Launch into Language' sessions supported by Family Support Workers and local Family Center who supplied childcare while the parents attended the sessions.
- Health Visitors are identifying families in need of support and referring to the Family Support Workers – 16 individual families are currently receiving this support
- Midwives are starting to identify and refer families in need of support

- Home Safety sessions offered to all pregnant women at 25 weeks
- Summer of Fun and Winter of Wellbeing - 168, 0-5years children benefitted from Summer of Fun. Currently a rolling programme of Winter of Wonder with first cohort of 15 children completed a 6 week programme and a second cohort of 15 signed up for January 2022.
- Early Years Integration Team co-delivering several groups. Work extensively with the only Family Centre in the area to keep it open and to support its revival. Now open five days per week.

Early Years: Impact and challenges of Covid-19 pandemic

- The Early Years Team became fully operational in October 2020, 6 months into the global pandemic and therefore faced a monumental barrier of setting up a place-based way of working during a time of strict restrictions.
- Quickly all the team had to change working practices of 'how to' engage with families, the wider community and other partners and key stakeholders.
- Engagement via virtual platforms and courses and programmes of support were delivered via Zoom calls or TEAMS. Whilst families engaged with this form of intervention it emerged that the positive impact of face-to-face delivery was immeasurable in meeting the needs of these families. Whilst virtual sessions allowed further reach and became accessible to those living furthest away, success was fully reliant on connectivity and adequate IT equipment.
- Online delivery was particularly hard for parents of pre-school children. Parents report that whilst virtual delivery was beneficial in some instances it was not their preferred choice of accessing programmes, groups, and support.
- Many babies and young children have not mixed with others as a result of the pandemic and the associated restrictions and therefore are finding it difficult to socialise and interact with peers which makes face to face delivery of services essential.
- The Team responded to this need by undertaking risk assessment and ongoing individual risk assessments, and were able very early on in the pandemic to deliver face to face support at home for individual families that were most in need.

Operational :

- Capacity of the team to respond to the needs of the population
- Lack of control/influence over how third sector partners operate during the pandemic
- COVID-19 uncertainty and fear affecting staff and parents of babies and young children
- The small size of the team affects capacity to deliver service when there is sickness or absence
- Annual nature of funding for the pilot

Strategic :

- Varying IT systems being used across services and the differing ways of collecting and storing information about children and their families.
- Cultural norms of organisations, service capacity and years of silo working are challenges that are being addressed and changed over time and with sensitivity by embracing the integration agenda for the early years.
- Work is underway in developing a Regional Maternity and Early Years Strategy setting out an agreed vision, objectives and priorities for all services working within the Early Years sector across HDUHB, Local Authority and third sector organisations. Alongside the strategy a regional Maternity and Early Years Outcomes framework is in development to ensure that all services and interventions are designed in line with the population needs and are having a positive influence on outcomes for children and their families across the HDUHB region.

Additional WG Grants

The service area has received a substantial amount of additional funding from Welsh Government within this financial year. The table below illustrates the grant, date received, its purpose and how the funding has been utilised.

Date Received	Grant & Purpose	Project Plan	£
25/5/21	Child Development Fund (REV) 1st round To support families with preschool children who may have fallen behind in their development because of the pandemic. Improving outcomes in relations to: Speech, Language & Communication (SLC), fine and gross motor skills and social and emotional development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of language and play virtual sessions and activity pack • Childcare for identified children via HV, TAF, CS, disability services. • SLC – funded SLT time to support childcare settings in utilising Wellcomm . Elklan training for childcare staff 	£201,066
28/10/21	Child Development Fund- (REV) 2nd round (As above)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent/carer and child sessions via family centres and community services to promote child development. • Childcare for identified children via HV, TAF, CS, disability services. • Promotion Speech language and Communication – communication boards in targeted parks 	£256,179

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training for early years staff to promote fine and gross motor skills • Support for families with disabled pre-school children • Resources for Ti a fi and Parent & Toddler Play Groups 	
17/09/21	CCG – Additional (REV) <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Funding for sustainability grants to help support childcare settings recover from the impact of Covid 2. Funding towards the cost of preparing the 2022 Childcare Sufficiency Assessments 3. Funding to supplement Flying Start, Families First existing to drive down waiting lists and provide support as early as possible. 	3. Funding to supplement Flying Start, Families First included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training for all CCG staff including, Resilience, Winston's Wish, Decider Skills, Parental conflict and Relationship, Systemic, Trauma. • Flying Start: Additional hours for Parenting Officer, SLT, Childcare staff, Family Links Nurture Programme training, ROSPA (home safety,) impact of neglect training, Forest School training, ALN support in FS childcare settings. • Families First: additional hours for existing staff, specifically for ALN/Disability staff and Domestic Abuse staff, Dad's Matters Pilot, therapeutic support, SLT support, • Legacy: Training courses and venue hire 	£531,934
23/09/21	Flying Start additional Capital grant (CAP)	Covid recovery funding to improve FS childcare setting, repairs, maintenance and adaptations across LA owned settings, including childcare settings situated in primary schools.	£311,500
Pending	Parenting Grant (REV) Funding towards developing the parenting workforce, innovative community projects and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training including; Family Links, Magic Behaviour Management - Schools 	£51,771

		<p>and Services Behaviour Support for All, Work with Parents National Occupational Standards, Baby Massage, Gro Brain, Writing Therapeutic Narratives, Life Story.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community project: Creative Conversational Family Play, Activities based in community spaces. Nine creative play session for families living in the Tyisha Ward (Children's First area) to develop creative play skills. • One Plus One, How to Argue Better Resources and Train the Trainer Training. 	
		Total	£1,352,450

Issues associated with the Covid Grants

- In year notification -some very late -short term, one off grants- to be spent by end financial year- no run in, planning time
- Specific Terms & Conditions limiting spend
- CDF : 2 terms of 6 month periods.
- Significant sums requiring additional services but no possibility of recruiting in the timescales given and no further commitment
- Capacity to deliver very challenging due to staffing issues across the board including in all other external agencies normally commissioned to deliver services
- Additional strain on small 'Infrastructure' Team to Plan, Deliver, Monitor, Evaluate: submit bids, progress reports, finance reports and comply with all Regs and Audit requirements.
- Positive use made of additional grants- many innovations to delivery but not possible to develop longer term until clarity of commitment of the resources

SUMMARY

Overall Family Support Programmes Challenges and Strengths

- Covid restrictions has had a significant detrimental impact on the delivery of preventative family support services in the County. The guidance for limiting social interaction has reduced all early intervention, promotional, drop-in, group activities to planned, targeted sessions only. This has had a big impact on numbers of people with which the service has been engaged. However, projects report higher needs in the families worked with and evidence of good engagement, families have reported better outcomes, on the distance travelled tool.
- Grant funded annual basis - impact of temporary contracts- Senior Manager agreement in progress - working to address this by accepting established grants as long term funding. This will enable recruiting to positions within main grant funded Programmes on a permanent basis and help with recruitment.
- High level of additional short-term grants- compromised staff capacity to manage. Need commitment to build and maintain a reasonable level of infrastructure staff.
- Tired workforce- managing significant change to delivery and additional delivery whilst also adapting to working from home arrangements. Staff voice important to hear and a priority for meaningful ongoing wellbeing and support agenda of the LA.
- Recruitment of suitably qualified and skilled staff has been and continues to be extremely challenging. Developing skilled staff is long term not a quick fix- short term grants do not support this objective.
- Service delivered by range of orgs, results in variation in Covid response.
- Public engagement affected by Covid messages-more difficult to engage targeted population: re-starts, re launch and much promotional work will be required for some elements of the Programmes to reach previous position of engagement in communities.
- Staff have adapted to being able to deliver many elements of the service on a virtual basis.
- Exceptional innovation and motivation shown to alternative service delivery during lockdowns: cooking sessions, delivery of thousands of play boxes for home virtual sessions, virtual parent /toddler singing sessions, walking groups etc etc
- Current and future delivery plans- services now positively embrace hybrid delivery as appropriate, to task and family preference.
- Confirmed the importance and impact of social media/communication channels with families.
- Opportunities have been taken to work with many different partners on planning for the additional funding.

Concluding Comments

Staff have worked hard to deliver support services throughout the pandemic. The numbers of families receiving a service has reduced significantly over this period for a number of reasons, as outlined within the report.

Preventative services work on the basis of positive engagement with the targeted population ie families voluntarily access the services often within their own communities. Covid prevented many of these services from running in their usual form, therefore many families did not have access to their usual networks of support.

We know that referrals to statutory children's services have been extremely high during the pandemic and that this level of demand is continuing. Whilst we cannot prove the correlation, we feel that it is reasonable to consider the link between the low availability of the usual family support services, and the high level of referrals further up the spectrum of need, at the level of statutory children's social care. We know that well supported parents, better parent their children.

'If we want to make a difference to children's lives, we must empower the people who care for them' Dr. Jack P Shankoff, Harvard Centre on the Developing Child.

Whilst group-based services will continue to be affected by Covid placing limitations on social mixing, our alternative methods of delivering support services to families has now had an opportunity to become established. We believe that we are now in a far stronger position than at the beginning of the pandemic, to continue to deliver the support most clearly needed by children, young people and families in the County and re-establish the important preventative nature of the service.