

Are there any gaps in the existing provisions that are in place within Carmarthenshire around the area of preconception and early years support. This relates to (but is not limited to):

- The promotion of primary carer giver and infant attachment
- Educational awareness and/or direct support pertaining to drug and alcohol use during pregnancy.
- Educational awareness and/ or direct support pertaining to infant brain development during the first 1001 days of life.
- Parental or couple support pertaining to domestic violence and substance abuse.

Carmarthenshire's **Family Support Strategy 2018-23** sets out how the council aims to develop and deliver early intervention services to support children, families and young people. This will be achieved by providing support as soon as a need is identified, at any point in a child's life, from the Early Years through to the teenage years. It describes joined-up approaches to supporting families across a range of needs.

The **prevention of ACEs** and **early intervention** to support families is at the centre of our work to support families in Carmarthenshire. Childhood experiences, both positive and negative, have a tremendous impact on future, and lifelong health and opportunity. Children and family services are organised according to distinct levels of need and range from **Universal Support** to **Protective Support**. Early Intervention and preventative work happen across the levels and is appropriate to what is required by an individual family or situation. Welsh Government programmes that provide non statutory support to families include Families First, Flying Start and Integrated Children's Centres. These programmes are delivered within Carmarthenshire and have a focus on:

- Parenting with a focus on attachment.
- Support for parents dealing with drug and alcohol misuse.
- Training for professionals in infant brain development.
- Embedding trauma informed practice within service delivery.
- Relationship advice and support including domestic abuse.
- Team Around the Family which works collaboratively to bring a number of agencies together to deliver a plan of support and improve outcomes for a family, child or young person.
- Childcare, education & health
- Intensive support for 0–3-year-olds children & their families living in Flying Start areas.

Despite the wealth of services on offer to families within the early years there remains to be clear gaps in the way in which services identify families and the way in which services are delivered. Welsh Government have recognised these gaps and developed the **Early Years Integration Transformation Programme** of which Carmarthenshire became a pathfinder area in 2019. The main aim of this programme is to transform the delivery of Maternity and Early Years Services from those that are segmented, and aligned along statutory boundaries, to those that use a placed based approach enabling teams to deliver the right support at the right time through being in co-productive relationships with the families, staff and partner organisations in their community. It also recognises the need to target families in need of support at the earliest point possible and therefore developing clear pathways for support from preconception.

At a local level focus groups with both professionals working within maternity and early years services and families accessing services from 0-7 years old have identified gaps within existing provision and improvements that are required to the delivery of maternity and early years services across all sectors.

Gaps:

- Antenatal support focusing on preparation for parenthood.
- Accessibility of services outside of core working hours – evenings and weekends
- Early identification of need (identifying families early in pregnancy)
- Access to current and up to date information about services for families living in Carmarthenshire i.e., information related to child development, positive relationships, parenting, health and wellbeing of both caregivers and their children.
- Inconsistent transition processes for children entering education.
- Families having to explain their stories to various professionals along their journeys is challenging and often results in families ‘falling through the net.’

What are we trying to achieve in Carmarthenshire?

Based on what we know about the current service landscape and what we have learned from families and early years professional we have developed a **Maternity and Early Years Strategy**. The strategy is available via the following link:

<https://earlyyearsstrategywest.wales/strategy/>

Our strategy for 2022-2026 aims to deliver:

- **Positive engagement/early intervention with families at the ante-natal stage**-To ensure that specialist services provide support to prepare families for parenthood and offer support at the earliest possible opportunity.
- **Positive engagement with families during Early Years**-To ensure our family needs are at the heart of joined-up services, so that families access the right support at the right time.
- **Positive transition from childcare to Early Years education** - To ensure a seamless transition process for all children and parents from pre-school settings into early years education.

These will be achieved by:

- Integrating our maternity and early years services
- Taking a person-centred approach to service design
- Developing our systems to enable effective collaboration.
- Developing the workforce
- Providing accessible information

Pilot: The Cwm Gwendraeth Early Years Integrated Team

The main aim of the pilot programmes is to build both individual and community resilience to enable families to live safe, healthy and fulfilling lives where they can successfully raise their children and fully optimise their potential. To achieve this, we will transform the delivery of Early Years Services from those that are segmented, and aligned along statutory boundaries, to those that use a placed based approach. This approach will not only provide integrated services but will also use a strengths-based model to improve relationships between sectors, improve community engagement and build safe and supportive environments, which will mitigate or reduce the long-term impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences.

Early successes:

Relationships across services both locally and regionally have developed and created opportunities for more integrated thinking and ways of working, these include:

- **Crosshands Health and Wellbeing Centre** – good partnership working, future plans to locate the Cwm Gwendraeth Team at the Crosshands Centre
- **Carmarthen Hub** – early years venue allocated within the building and plans to locate an Early Years Team within
- **Save the Children Starting Strong research project** – Supporting families experiencing poverty through the early years transition phase.
- **Save the Children Ehangu research project** – bringing together partners to work together to develop place-based systems change.
- **Work with families-** both qualitative and quantitative data collected indicates that families are experiencing positive outcomes as a result of their engagement with the team. Parents report the positive impact accessing the services has had on their mental health and wellbeing, their parenting and their knowledge of services within their locality.
- The phased implementation of universal childcare for 2-year-olds (Flying Start Expansion) gives unexpected opportunities to become aligned with the transformation of maternity and early years services i.e., provides the missing element of 'childcare' in the non-Flying Start areas.

Opportunities

The Maternity and Early Years transformation programme clearly supports the **delivery of the purpose and aim** of the Carmarthenshire Public Services Board and the Regional Partnership Board. And closely aligns with the five ways of working in achieving the wellbeing goals.

Closer partnership working- to ensure and realise the mutual potential for improving services for families across the region.

Risks

Currently we have committed funding until 31st March 2024. There is a commitment of funding from WG for 2024/2025 at a reduced level but this will not be known or confirmed until the start of 2024.

The pilot has enabled us to bring our 'strategic vision' to life in the form of operational services and at the same time provide evidence for what works well in transformational practice.

Failure to continue with the operational aspect risks having a good strategy with no real driving force or an effective means of putting the theory into practice.

Failure to capitalise and keep building on these pilot services risks losing years in service development, which is well acknowledged as requiring time, energy, committed staff and good leadership. The current pilot area would revert to universal services without further commitment of funding past 2025. This is clearly a particular risk to those areas involved.

More importantly it would risk delaying the implementation of integrating early years services across the region at a time when this seems infinitely possible to do so.

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