

Appendix A

The following examples of how the learning department demonstrates the 5 ways of working were collated for a Wales Audit Office review of Flying Start provision across the County Borough. Moving forward it is the intention to consider how different activities within the department meet these ways on working as part of our self-evaluation cycle. These examples will be shared with you on an annual basis

Early Years Strategy

Background/ Context

In 2012, an independent Review of Early Years was undertaken by Wavehill, this review outlined the social economic environment of the Authority in addition to identifying key themes and priorities. The Review was overseen by a multi-agency group made up of partners from the public, private and third sector including childcare providers, health and education.

The review was used to inform the development of a 3 year Early Years Strategy which was completed by the same multi-agency group. The Strategy is currently under review and being re-drafted once again in a partnership context.

Long-term

The strategy provided for a 3 year approach but with a clear focus on how these priorities impact on the longer term outcomes for children and young people. This strategy and its focus on outcomes and using data more clearly to understand needs has driven forward many of the service developments described within the examples provided. The priorities are reviewed annually and there is currently a review of the strategy which is due to be complete March 2020. The future strategy will also take a long term view on the geographical versus needs based approach currently being considered regionally for Flying Start

Prevention

The nature of the strategy being a 0-3 years (including ante natal) strategy which is about getting upstream of any delays and issues within families, before they start to impact on the longer term health and education outcomes for children.

The strategy has an emphasis on transition which is a vulnerable time for children and their families and on meeting the holistic needs of families and in particular vulnerable families.

Integration

The Strategy has a clear vision with priorities that still link directly to the Councils priorities around attainment in Focus on the Future and also the PSB priorities in relation to the first 1,000 days.

The Strategy recognises the importance of health within the early year's context with one of the strategic objectives directly relating to the work of Cwm Taf Morgannwg University Health Board.

Collaboration and involvement

The Early Years strategy was developed in partnership with: health, schools, childcare providers, Education, Social Services and third sector childcare organisations. All partners have a vested interest in developing local priorities and on the success of their delivery due to the longer term implications for both families and services. Parents have been involved in marketing childcare in partnership with providers to highlight to other parents the benefits this brings to children and families.

Childcare Commissioning approach

Background/ context

The Flying Start programme expanded significantly from 2013- 2016 and increased from a 523 cap to 1203. In 2013, a new commissioning model was agreed by Cabinet. This model was developed in conjunction with the sector and included a supply and demand approach whilst balancing the needs of the sector and parents/ carers.

The new core and approved model of commissioning took a mixed economy approach that balances the financial stability of the sector, offers increased parental choice and increases quality across providers. The work undertaken with this commissioning model has also benefited the implementation of the childcare offer programme as providers were proactive and engaged and ready to implement.

Long-term

The commissioning model considered the long term financial viability of childcare providers whilst balancing the need to secure value for money investment for Flying Start whilst also reducing wasted childcare places.

The design of the commissioning model (mixed economy) enabled providers to open up their businesses and develop a more sustainable approach beyond the lifespan of Flying Start and brings to the fore principles of social engineering to promote children coming together in settings not defined by 'poverty' or of living in income benefit households.

The core and approved model introduced enabled any provider that meets the required quality thresholds to offer Flying Start provision, opening up business opportunities for all. This opportunity enabled the LA to influence the quality practices of all settings that wish to benefit from the opportunity and this now includes almost all providers (93%) across the borough

The model also recognised the need to incentivise providers, to encouraged good attendance by children in order to set foundations for the future and increase the take up of childcare. The more children attended the more the business earned up to the maximum allowed from Flying Start.

Prevention

The model focusses on attendance 'incentivised' and through effective partnership support from health visitors, childcare providers and Barnardo's, attendance is consistently at 83% which is one of the highest across Flying Start in Wales. The model has also enabled a reduction in reliance on Flying Start and reduced wasted places enabling better use of resources

The attendance policy and monitoring and review system has recently been updated in consultation with the early years sector and it is expected that this will further improve on the attendance rates within childcare.

Quality childcare is vital to ensuring children's outcomes are appropriately supported, a quality monitoring tool has been developed that checks and reviews quality of provision to ensure settings meet Flying start quality requirements. This approach also begins to challenge a two tier approach to childcare delivery across the county borough – from care to learning.

Integration

Access to high quality pre-school provision is a key priority within the Focus on the Future and the Early Years Strategy. This is also a key feature within the PSB Wellbeing Plan in respect of the first 1,000 days.

The model promoted the need to increase children's attendance in flying start linking with the priority in education of tackling non-attendance and promoting a culture of valuing learning opportunities amongst parents.

Collaboration

The commissioning model was established following an information event and regular dialogue with the early years sector ensuring a sound understanding on the impact for the sector and the benefits it could bring to Flying Start as a programme.

The further development of the centralised admissions process has involved the sector and education in order to ensure efficient use of resources through the learning gained from implementing the commissioning model

Involvement

A termly childcare sub group meeting is held with all Flying Start childcare providers to facilitate good communication and ensure that providers are able to influence the policies and practices that affect them.

The new commissioning model incorporated a series of 15 family sessions whereby parents are engaged with their children during the holiday periods. Parents complete evaluations following every session and an annual evaluation report is drafted. As a result of parent feedback the family sessions were reviewed and redesigned to better meet the needs of children and their families.

Foundation Phase Profile

Context / background

The Foundation Phase Profile assessment measures children's skills and enables planning and targeting of childcare support at an individual level and on a setting basis.

Good use of outcomes data to measure children's development and the aim is for all children in Flying Start to achieve outcome level 1 in all areas of the curriculum and this is quality assured through joint moderation with schools and shared through transition systems and processes.

The outcomes are captured centrally through a shared management information system with education to support schools in meeting future education needs.

Parents are involved in children's target setting, and reviews, and parent and children together (PACT) sessions in order that they can better understand and support their child's development and learning

Long Term

Prior to the introduction of the Foundation Phase Profile assessment, Flying Start recognised the importance of using data effectively to ensure children start school ready to learn which is why this was embedded in the strategy in 2015. This continues to be a driving focus and the introduction of the FPP potentially allows for future benchmarking across Wales

Education and early years are currently implementing a joint approach to the strategic use of the council's Capita one system to improve long term tracking of the impact of Flying Start through to age 7 and potentially up to age 16

Prevention

Identifying children's skills levels and putting strategies in place to support children's learning is preventing children starting school with a developmental delay and provides a solid foundation for future learning. The early identification of children needs is enabling more timely and appropriate referrals to other services. However the data also identifies areas of the curriculum which require attention through children not meeting expected levels e.g. Speech and Language or numeracy.

FPP data is being used to differentiate between types of learners to ensure needs of all learners are being met these include children with English as an Additional Language, boys and girls. Differentiation of delivery for EAL/boys/girls.

Integration

Cwm Taf Wellbeing Strategy prioritises the first 1000 days which includes ensuring children's development enables them to have a great start in life working across partners including childcare and with parents. (Regional)

The approach dovetails with the Councils Focus on the Future and is central to achieving the priorities with the Best Start to life area, and in raising children's attainment at all ages throughout education (MTCBC)

An Early Years strategy has been in place and agreed by elected members since 2015. The Strategy rolled over for a year and is currently being reviewed and updated, this strategy is a multi-agency strategy with key partners including Health and Public Health, Education, social services etc. .

Collaboration

A programme of joint moderation has been piloted using both the previous CDP and now the FPP with nursery class teachers and childcare providers across the borough. This approach will continue to be embedded to ensure consistent assessment and the validity of the judgements made

All Flying Start childcare settings have a link Health Visitors which assist with information sharing and early identification of children with ALN and through a redesign in services can call on professional expertise through roles such as SLT and Ed Psych.

A shared approach to the use of Capita one (MIS) system has been implemented to ensure outcomes for children are captured at source and shared to enable future analysis of the impact of Flying Start and a number of other interventions with families. A capita one development team is shared across programmes to develop the system.

Involvement

Childcare Providers: Prior to the introduction of the FPP the 3 registered education providers (also FS provider) came forward to work with the Local authority and therefore WG to test the draft framework and to provide feedback on its strengths and weaknesses. This shaped the final guidance for other childcare providers not only across the county borough but also influenced the final framework produced by WG.

Childcare providers after the initial pilot felt that they needed more detailed guidance than the framework provided and worked with the LA to establish a Guidance Booklet that is now in operation across the local authority flying Start providers. In addition this booklet is now also being used by some other Local authorities (Blaenau Gwent, Bridgend)

Parents: Parents are involved in their child's learning and development through termly reviews with childcare practitioners to look at their child's next steps,

Family sessions were reviewed in light of feedback and evaluations with families and led to a reshaped service which now offers transition sessions for new parents whose child is entering childcare, parent and child together sessions during term time within the childcare setting, and a smaller number of traditional family sessions during school holidays

Transition information is shared and agreed with parents, prior to school entry and are encouraged to share this, however settings once consent has been agreed also share this with schools to improve information sharing on children schools are receiving

Early Language Development & Speech and Language Therapy

Background/ context

In 2014, an independent review of the language needs in Merthyr Tydfil was undertaken by Wavehill, the Review identified a significant language deficit and correlated the high levels of need with the high levels of social deprivation. Following the Review it was agreed that Flying Start would implement the WellComm speech and language screening tool to aid the early identification of children's speech, language and communications skills.

An internal Review conducted in 2016, resulted in significant additional investment in this area both in health and Local Authority funded staff and an Early Language Graduated response and pathway was developed that outlined the interventions at varying levels of need.

Analysis of the WellComm data showed that whilst children's language skills were significantly improving whilst in childcare 2-3 years, annually children's skills levels were declining on entry into childcare at 2 years.

The graduated response and pathway were subsequently reviewed and services redesigned to redirect interventions to children earlier. The specialist Speech and Language Therapist (SLT) support was also re-focussed towards up skilling professionals to better support children's language needs rather than case hold high numbers, ensuring only the most complex cases were held by SLT service.

Long Term

Good use of data has been used to review and realign resources to better meet the needs of children. This has enhanced the focus on the importance of a clear and consistent approach to communication skills of children without which the curriculum becomes out of reach. Investment in the family before pre-school begins has been recognised as essential if children are to be given an equal start, ensuring they can participate in language rich environments to assist longer term outcomes.

The longer term tracking of children's progress is important to establish the impact of the support and this will be achieved through the Capita database and tracking children's end of Foundation Phase outcomes at age 7 years. .

Prevention

Commissioning of health speech and language and community nursery nurses has been re-focused as the data identified the original model as unsustainable and not generating the outcomes needed due to the high demand on SLT leads. The refocusing of this demand has enabled settings to be more proactive and reduced referrals to SLT.

Speech and Language is seen locally as everybody's business through the promotion of Welsh Government learning to talk key messages and distribution of information packs to parents.

The use of Wellcomm screening at 18 months is ensuring that there is an early identification of children's language skills in order to offer support early through a graduated response dependent upon the child's needs.

Integration

Good early language skills is fundamental to supporting children's attainment which is within the Best Start priority of the Councils Focus on the Future Corporate Plan.

Language is a key element of the Foundation Phase Profile which is linked to the overarching vision of the Early Years Strategy of all children achieving outcome 1 in all 4 areas of the FPP.

The updated graduated response and pathway focusses on the first 1000 days as being critical to promoting and developing children's language and communication skills.

The Early Language Development team are co-located with other Flying Start professionals which assists with the joint working and sharing of information.

The Early Language groups are delivered in partnership with health and MTCBC staff.

Due to the needs of children outside of Flying Start and the importance of communication skills investment in this service has also been made through the legacy and Families first grants bringing a joint commissioning approach and integrated service delivery to early language development.

Collaboration

The developments within Early language has been led by a multi-agency steering group who have advised on the development of the service offer, reviewed the outcomes generated and considered enhancements or changes to these services.

Health have been instrumental to the development of the Early language review and approach and originally collated and analysed the WellComm through health visitors before a review identified the need to centralise the approach within the core Flying Start team.

Links with statutory Speech and Language services are very good for those children with more significant and complex Speech, language and communication issues and support to settings means settings feel more confident and skilled in supporting children.

Involvement

Parents complete a distance travelled tool to measure their ability to support their child's language skills pre and post intervention, this feedback is used to influence future service delivery. Targets are set for children for parents to work on in the home and this is reviewed at subsequent interventions.

The review which has been the starting point for this work involved, parents, settings and a range of professionals in order to shape the future service model

Additional Learning Needs

Background/ context

There is an emphasis in Flying Start on the early identification of children with additional learning needs. A graduated response has been developed that provides a framework for the early intervention and support for children with additional learning needs in early years provision.

Specialist support is available to Flying Start children through Speech and Language therapist and an Education Psychologist who provide advice to early years practitioners on strategies to support children's needs

Long Term

An ALN resource file for the sector has been developed with relevant documents and policies to assist settings in their work with children with ALN. Whilst additional support is available through Flying Start including 1:1 Flying Start is aware of the need not to create a dependency or expectation amongst parents which then cannot be met once progressing into mainstream education.

A Flying Start ALNCO forum has been established to offer network support and sharing of policy and practice developments to enable settings to better support children with ALN and bring a wider skill base that enables children with ALN to access settings alongside their peers.

The early years sector has accessed ALNET Act training in preparation for changes to the sector and all ALN data is captured on the Capita database which is a shared education system this assists with transition and longer term tracking of children's support needs and outcomes.

Prevention

Early identification of children's needs is a priority and there are a range of assessments that are used to inform panel decisions these include; SOGs (Health Visitors) Foundation Phase Profile (early years practitioners) Wellcomm (Early Language development/ health) and Education Psychologist.

The graduated response promotes the reduction/ withdrawal of enhanced support where possible prior to entry into school.

The Education Psychologist supports professionals to develop strategies for working with children with ALN with a view to building in longer term sustainability into their work.

Integration

The service is preparing for the introduction of the ALNET Act duties through briefing sessions with the sector, PCP training and introduction of One Page profiles. This is being developed in conjunction with the regional education consortium approach, reflecting the approach taken with schools.

Joint approaches in recognising medical needs of children have enabled Flying Start providers and health to ensure identified children can access childcare provision with either the right medical support or through up skilling childcare staff.

Collaboration

A Flying Start multi-agency enhanced panel is well established and considers the support needs and transition arrangements for children accessing early years provision and in reverse there is representation from Flying Start on the education ALNCO forum with schools to ensure sharing of good practice and cross sector working

Multi-agency Team Around the Child meetings held for children with ALN

Some evidence of good links between health and early years for those children with complex medical needs.

Involvement

Parents are involved in the review of children's Individual Play Plans (IPPs), Team Around the Child (TAC) meetings and the development of One Page Profiles.

Parenting Support

Background/ context

Parenting support is a core component of the Flying Start offer to all parents. Support is offered through a range of evidence based programmes and 1:1 interventions and is driven by the needs of families. A Dad's Parent Support Worker engages with dads in response to an identified low take up previously identified. .

In 2018, Wavehill carried out an independent review of Parenting support, in response to the findings additional investment was through the refocusing of services which also enabled the piloting of an ante natal parenting programme which is now being tested through an additional evidenced based approach.

A Parenting Strategy is under development and takes into account the findings of the Review.

A Be Positive not Perfect parenting marketing campaign has been developed in partnership with children, young people, parents and professionals.

Long Term

Introduction of ante natal parenting programme with a view to supporting parents earlier in their journey as a parent and provide a pathway of support through the various stages of parenting. A second pilot is currently underway however this approach has enabled skills to be developed across a wider range of partners to deliver a welcome to the world programme which is evidenced based. Investment has also previously been made in a resource for parents that is web based and independently accessible in community locations

Recognition of the need to link parenting support to children outcomes, has been agreed by the multi-agency tackling poverty group and this will be developed using the capita system in partnership with education and the capita one development team. The importance of the approach is reflected in the additional investment made by the poverty agenda in order to

assist parents in creating appropriate home environments that protect children from aces and foster learning and childrens development. This also reflects why all partners were trained in the grow brain model and provided with key messages to share with parents on the importance of learning through play.

Prevention

Flying Start parenting support is a universal offer to all Flying Start parents which avoids just focussing on those families already facing difficulties. Through analysis of data and the review the model of interventions has been enhanced to include additional 1:1 approaches in the home to support parents to engage in more formalised groups through increased confidence and resilience.

Parenting support is also available to non-Flying Start families using funding from Families First, this allows for group provision to be more sustainable and brings an integrated approach to service delivery

In assessing the impact of parenting support a distance travelled tool (TOPSE) has been implemented for a number of years and analyses the progress made by parents. The need to join this up to hard data on childrens outcomes will provide a sound evidence base for the effectiveness of these prevention interventions.

Integration

MTCBC - One of the key components of the Best Start to Life priority in the Corporate Plan is that 'children live in a nurturing and stimulating home environment'.

Regional - Parenting support links with the Cwm Taf Wellbeing plan in supporting the development of Thriving Communities.

MTCBC – Parenting is incorporated into the Early Years Strategy for the Local Authority with a focus on involving parents in their children's learning and improving families resilience.

Joint commissioning approach across the authority between Families First and Flying Start and the parenting strategy provides for a LA approach to parenting rather than a team based approach

Collaboration

The parenting review and strategy has brought together key partners across agencies to identify learning from the review and to plan future services and strategy.

Parenting programmes are co-facilitated by a number of professionals including health and Barnardo's bringing different skillsets and shared learning to both partners and parents.

Parenting teams are co-located with health, family support and early language professionals in the community hubs within the north and south of the borough, developing integration and information sharing.

Parenting are utilising Capita database which is a shared information system with education and other Flying Start services, which will lead to longer term tracking of outcomes and their impacts

Parenting team also delivers key worker support for families whose main presenting need is parenting and this is commissioned through families first enabling the service to coordinate interventions around the family's needs.

Shared approach for parenting support for families of children with ASD between Education and Parenting to ensure consistent messages across key groups e.g. early bird programme or work directly with identified schools (Goetre)

Parenting website developed in coloration with health.

In developing a graduated response to parenting the Parent Network has been commissioned in order to establish peer support groups in the community as the review identified some parents were accessing programmes multiple times as they needed a light touch of ongoing support.

Involvement

The parenting marketing campaign was developed in partnership with children, young people parents and professionals.

The Parenting Review involved families and their views this has led to both further investment and to reshaping of services including the development of the parenting network and the piloting of ante natal programmes.

Parents are involved in reviewing the progress that they make through the TOPSE tool or through progress against a family action plan, this information is utilised in order to consider future delivery or shaping of programmes.

It is clear from some reviews that parents struggle with large group interventions and this led to more 1:1 service being available and a more focused engagement strategy so that parents are clear on how the support will be delivered.