

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Education and Children's Services Committee
DATE	4 July 2023
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Developing a Family Support Model and the Edge of Care Pilots
REPORT NUMBER	CFS/23/207
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TERMS OF REFERENCE	1.1.2

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The Education Operational Delivery Committee of 8 September 2022, asked for a report on progress in developing a Family Support Model for children and families and an early evaluation of the impact of the two Edge of Care Pilots operating within Lochside and Northfield Academies and the proposed next steps. Given the overlapping nature of these subjects they have been brought together into the one report.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:-

- 2.1 notes the progress being made to develop a family support model;
- 2.2 instructs the Interim Director Children and Family Services to report progress in developing a Family Support Model through the Children's Services Plan annual progress report;
- 2.3 notes the high level evaluation of the two Edge of Care pilots;
- 2.4 instructs the Interim Director of Education and Children's Services to bring a final evaluative report to committee in early 2024 to include recommendations of how to scale up the Edge of Care pilots in a sustainable manner subject to positive final evaluation; and
- 2.5 notes the content of the Child Poverty Report.

3. CURRENT SITUATION

3.1 NATIONAL CONTEXT

- 3.1.1 The Independent Care Review (ICR), The Promise, published in February 2020, made a series of recommendations following an in-depth review of the care system. Implementation of The Promise will be supported by three, 3 year plans. The first, Plan 21 – 24, tasks agencies to work together and focus on delivering whole family support with an emphasis on early intervention and

prevention. The Promise identified 'Ten Principles of Intensive Family Support' and these should be at the core of all family support models. The ten key principles are as follows:

Community based	Holistic and relational
Responsive and timely	Therapeutic
Work with family assets	Non stigmatising
Empowerment and agency	Patient and persistent
Flexible	Underpinned by children's rights

3.1.2 To support delivery of The Promise the Scottish Government has committed to investing £500m of the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund (WFWF) to support and scale up innovative family support and build capacity across the system. The central aspiration of the fund is to ensure that families receive the right help, at the right time and in the right place. The WFWF has identified five long term outcomes which partnerships will need to evidence impact against.

- Improved family wellbeing (aligned to Children, Young People & Families outcomes framework and indicators)
- Reduction in the gap in wellbeing outcomes for those from our most disadvantaged communities
- Reduction in families requiring crisis intervention
- Reduction in children and young people living away from families
- Increase in families taking up wider supports

Aberdeen City's share of the WFWF in Year 1 and Year 2 is £1.025m.

3.1.3 The Scottish Government have commissioned IFF Research to evaluate the impact of the WFWF. As part of this a small number (four) partnerships have been identified to be part of a deeper dive to evaluate their improvement activities. Aberdeen City are one of the four areas. This will involve researchers from the independent evaluators meeting with front line staff as well as strategic leaders to explore the impact of improvement activity. This research will support our own learning and enable learning to be shared nationally.

3.2 DEVELOPING A FAMILY SUPPORT MODEL

3.2.1 The design and delivery of a Family Support Model requires all partners to work together to keep children safe from harm and neglect by strengthening the coordination of services to children and young people, it also requires children's rights to be at the heart of decision making. Work presented in report OPE/22/178 described how a series of workshops were undertaken to identify vulnerabilities in the current system and this, alongside analysis of demand guided the establishment of four thematic / categories of risk for the redesign of family support model. These categories were:

- Children on the edge of care
- Children with disabilities
- Children in conflict with the law
- Children and young people exposed to the risk of trauma

3.2.2 As reported in September 2022, work to develop tests of change aligned to the 4 categories of need were driven by a Systems Leadership Group. Other areas of work taken forward by the Systems Leadership Group include:

- Development of a set of commissioning principles to ensure greater alignment across the partnership

- Exploration of unintended consequences associated with siloed decisions such as the need to fund out of authority placements which may not be most appropriate
- Developing opportunities for co-location and co-delivery
- Agreement of the need to better align all policies for children

3.2.3 The group agreed a working hypothesis and guiding policy.

Our hypothesis is: that by bringing consistent visibility to the assessed needs of individuals, families and communities; a commonality of approach to the planning, commissioning and evaluation of services across the three GIRFEC tiers; and a shared governance model which provides strategic and operational oversight, partners will be able to design and deliver a coherent and effective data informed continuum of services and support which meet those identified needs at all levels, but in such a way that the impact is more effective early intervention and prevention, leading to a reduction in avoidable demand for Tier 3 services and a redirection of specialist resource and knowledge to further upstream prevention.

Our guiding policy: is to improve our responsiveness to emerging risks by sharing responsibility for the leadership, delivery and accountability of Family Support within a more coherent strategic and operational Tiered framework. A key outcome is that a successful Tier 2 model would evidence a reduction in referrals to Children's Social Work

3.3 Developing the Children's Services Plan

3.3.1 As the Systems Leadership Group progressed their tests, Officers began developing the Children's Services Plan (CSP). It quickly became apparent that those developing tests of change as part of our Family Support Model were ideally suited to sit on the Children's Services Board given their knowledge and senior leadership of the system. There was also considerable cross over in personnel and workplans. Given the System Leadership Group's commitment to exploit interdependences to maximise the use of resources and remove duplication, agreement was reached to invest time in developing a comprehensive CSP to ensure that its delivery would realise effective delivery of an agile Family Support Model. As such, the work of each of the 4 sub-groups has been taken into the Improvement Groups aligned to the Children's Services Board. This approach is exploiting interdependencies more fully with other statutory plans, such as the Child Poverty Plan, which are incorporated within the CSP.

Monitoring progress and being agile

3.3.2 There are a high number of policies for children tracked through the CSP including our Corporate Parenting Plan and Child Poverty Plan. All of these impact on the shape of a Family Support Model given that many families face multiple challenges reflected in various plans. Effective monitoring of progress against the Plan and outcome data for children will enable us to ascertain the impact of our changing model of Family Support on children, young people and families in real time so that we can be assured that changes are leading to more positive outcomes. The Board also monitors the extent to which children's voices are informing on-going developments. The use of Grants (for example Scottish Attainment Challenge funding) are considered by the Board. Allocations of resource from the WFWF are agreed at the Children's Services

Board as the fund essentially enables delivery of our CSP. Taking this approach to the shared consideration on how best to utilise funding is helping to ensure that we maximise the use of available resources.

- 3.3.3 In order to increase oversight of a complex policy arena and to ensure that WFWF is spent on priority areas, the Children's Services Board has introduced a 'tracker' to assist reporting on improvement activity and high level outcomes. Accessible to all partners, the tracker brings together the core data aligned to the CSP and other strategic plans to enable Board members to 'read across' the various policies for children. The tracker forms a core focus of each Board meeting ensuring appropriate multi-agency support and challenge on progress. Taking this approach will also assist the partnership to report progress at a local and national level in keeping with our legislative duties for example in children's rights and child poverty reporting.
- 3.3.4 This streamlined and data informed approach to recording improvement activity and impact is freeing up officer time and allowing the Board to be responsive as need and vulnerability fluctuate over the lifetime ensuring we remain responsive and flexible in approach. This approach is helping to embed a culture of collective responsibility and strengthening partnership working.

3.4 Alignment with Public Protection

- 3.4.1 An examination of the identified areas of improvement within the CSP highlighted that circa 30% of the improvement activity has a direct alignment to the 2021 – 24 Child Protection Improvement Plan. As a result of this alignment, the Child Protection Committee and Children's Services Board have taken time to clarify the role and responsibilities of both groups in both development work and on-going evaluation to ensure clear lines of responsibility and accountability for keeping children safe. This will support a continuing alignment of our strategic planning arrangements with a focus on ensuring a trauma informed and preventative lens for services to children, young people and their families who have experienced harm.
- 3.4.2 Work is progressing to consider how a local Bairns Hoose to support children and young people who have been victims or witnesses to abuse or violence, as well as children under the age of criminal responsibility whose behaviour has caused significant harm or abuse. On the 31 May 2023 the Scottish Government published the Bairns Hoose Standards. These will inform our thinking when developing our Bairns Hoose. In addition, we will engage with children, young people and their families who have experienced a child protection investigation to help inform the design of our Bairns Hoose.
- 3.4.3 The Scottish Government have indicated that applications to become a 'Bairns Hoose Pathfinder' will open in June 2023, closing in August 2023. It is anticipated there will be four pathfinders covering a diversity of communities. We anticipate having a fully shaped proposal for the Bairns Hoose in late 2023 and will then be able to align our remaining services around it.
- 3.4.4 It is recognised that the current capacity and skills base across Tier 2 services is not always able to prevent the escalation of children, young people and families into Tier 3. Approaches to addressing this need to be considered alongside the development of a local Bairns Hoose to ensure a responsive and agile model of Family Support. The challenge all partnerships face is how to

realign resource from Tier 3 to support the development of Tier 2 services at a point when demand for Tier 3 services exceeds capacity. Learning from the Edge of Care Pilots (see below) will inform how best to address this challenge.

3.5 Aligning children and adult services

3.5.1 Members will be aware of the intention to introduce a National Care Service with the aim of improving health and social care for adults. Given that young people transition from children to adult services, it is important that we look at how better to align approaches so that families have a clearer understanding of the support available. Work is progressing to better align support for those with disabilities across child and adult services. This work will form part of our Getting it Right for Everyone (GIRFE) pathfinder. It is hoped that this work will ultimately align GIRFEC and GIRFE so that there is a seamless transition between systems.

3.6 Understanding and addressing child poverty

3.6.1 The Children's Services Board has recently led on the development of our Child Poverty Report. The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 places a duty on local authorities and health boards to report annually on activity they are taking, and will take, to reduce child poverty. The proposed Child Poverty Annual Report (Appendix A) satisfies this duty. Undertaking the reporting process has further highlighted how aligned child poverty is with other aspects of vulnerability across the city and how different communities are impacted quite differently. There is a need to explore if community level data could be collated to help us understand changes in real time and help shape an approach to increased collaboration by staff serving communities to address child poverty more effectively.

3.7 Alliance Model

3.7.1 In December 2022 Council gave approval for the re-commissioning of Family Support Services via a local Alliance model. This model will commence on 1st April 2024 for two years with an option to extend for a further three years thereby aligning it to the CSP. The contract with Third sector providers will deliver early intervention support services for families. Those commissioned services will in turn be required to form alliances to local community groups and it is hoped that this approach will help maximise the use of resource to support those most in need of support. This approach will support the alignment of resources to families as they move up and down the continuum of need and vulnerability. The services will also be required to ensure their service model is informed by the voices of those who use their services and aligned to the 10 Principles of Intensive Family Support.

3.8 Fit Like Family Wellbeing

3.8.1 The Fit Like Family Wellbeing service brings together Education, Children's Social Work, Family Learning and Youth Services along with Children's 1st. The Fits Like Service delivers a range of family support services and is considered a model of best practice. At its heart is a rights-based trauma informed service. The voice of children, young people and their families are central to identifying their needs and shaping the support offer. Learning from delivery of the Fit Like Service is informing our broader commissioning and development of family support services.

- 3.8.2 Data gathered over the course of 2021 & 2022 evidences that whole family support is timely and complex with each family member having their unique set of needs making a 'one sizes fits all' approach incompatible with demand. Early and preventative work is not 'short-term intervention' and some families require services to 'stick with them' as they navigate through the problems in their lives that they have identified.
- 3.8.3 Data would also indicate that the impact of COVID has resulted in a greater level of complexity to the needs of children young people and families. Poor parental mental health, complex relational needs and the emotional dysregulation of children and young people have all been negatively compounded by the pandemic.
- 3.8.4 A critical component of the Fit Like Service includes working alongside Universal colleagues to deliver preventative and early intervention approaches to enhance the capacity of Universal Services. Delivering LIAM (Let's Introduce Anxiety Management) within schools is one of the ways in which capacity is being developed.

3.9 Workforce development

- 3.9.1 The Promise rightly recognise the criticality of "nurturing Scotland's workforce" if we are going to deliver effective whole family support to prevent children and young people escalating into Tier 3/requiring statutory intervention. This includes a rethinking of learning and development to create a well-supported workforce that can operate across disciplines.
- 3.9.2 This challenge is captured within Aberdeen City's Children's Services Plan 2023 – 26. At the heart is enabling all staff who have a direct role working with and supporting children, young people and families to access trauma-informed training at a level appropriate to their role. The Children's Services Board are currently developing training for all staff on Child Poverty.

3.10 Request for Assistance

- 3.10.1 During the initial stages of the COVID Pandemic the Local Authority with its digital partners developed a 'Request for Assistance' (RfA) process. This Microsoft form enabled universal services to highlight children and young people assessed as having additional vulnerabilities and who might require support from other services internal to the council or from our partners. Adopting a test and learn approach, the RfA process served to provide a holistic overview of needs, vulnerability and demand for services/supports and helped inform the use of Scottish Attainment Challenge funding as detailed in the Education Service National Improvement Framework Plan.
- 3.10.2 Educational authorities have many statutory duties, which span various pieces of legislation. In order to ensure educational provision is directed towards the individual needs and talents of each child/young person, schools may need to request assistance from partner services/agencies. Further streamlining the RfA process will better secure timeous and appropriate support. In addition, streamlining use of technology will enable the Education service to make increasing use of performance information to support self-evaluation for self-improvement, as mandated by the Education (Scotland) Act 2016.
- 3.10.3 As is stands, the current RfA system utilises a variety of technological solutions (Microsoft Teams, Forms, Excel, and Robotic Process Automation via Blue Prism, which is out-sourced to Agyllis to oversee). This results in a chain

effect, which can implicate system operation if one element fails. This also makes making system adaptations, changes and improvements very difficult as each has a knock-on effect on the other. To address these challenges WFWF funding is being utilised to develop, a bespoke system, to ensure the system meets the needs of the partnership. In addition, in-built analytics – a feature of the new system – will support schools, educational services, and partner services in their use of live data to support self-evaluation. Thinking ahead, the new system is fully adaptable and customisable, which means adjustments and improvements can be made based on self-evaluation.

3.10.4 In accordance with Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) policy and the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, each case is tracked and monitored by the team around a child (TAC). When a request for assistance is accepted, a partner service/provider joins the TAC for the length of their service's involvement. This is standard, embedded practice across Children and Family Services. In almost all cases, oversight of progress and planning will be undertaken using a Child Plan, which the TAC will input into.

3.11 Provision of Youth Work, Family Learning and financial advice

3.11.1 Given the varied needs of children and families, the Local Authority continues to use Scottish Attainment Challenge and WFWF to invest in additional Community Learning capacity. Over the last year the 4 school Money Advisors, attached to the Financial Inclusion Team have helped families achieve:

- Financial Gains of £1,077,325.24
- Assisted/Assisting 194 households with debt issues.
- Helping with total debts of £1,129,447.58
- 381 households given full benefit checks
- Assisted 57 households to claim benefits/12 to challenge their benefits.

3.11.2 2074 young people (aged 10-18 years) and 689 children (aged 5-9 years) have engaged in youth work activity with 1648 of those young people reporting improved mental health and wellbeing as a result of their engagement with the service.

3.11.3 2,459 young people have engaged with the Saltire Awards in Aberdeen. These awards, which are for volunteers aged 12-25 and co-ordinated by ACVO, continue to contribute positively to employability skills. 56 children and 16 young people were support to complete nationally recognised awards.

3.11.4 Over 100 young people identified as unlikely to secure a positive destination benefited from youth work programmes. Children and young people in the majority of primary and secondary schools in the City continue to benefit from youth work support through Scottish Attainment Challenge Funding.

3.11.5 Over 2022-23 617 referrals have been received from across all secondary schools. 178 individual 1-2-1 sessions were delivered along with 421 group sessions.

- 26% of referrals sought support with health and wellbeing.
- 20% of referrals sought support to manage relationships.
- 16% of referrals sought support to improve communication with others.
- 13% of referrals sought support to improve self-awareness.

3.11.6 Two years of data strongly supports the provision of youth work in schools and Scottish Attainment Challenge funding will be used to maintain this provision. Work will continue to align this provision with the Family Support Model over session 23/24. This work will be informed by the formal evaluation of the Edge of Care Pilots.

3.12 EDGE OF CARE PILOTS

3.12.1 As previously noted The Promise aims to re-set our focus on prevention and early intervention to avoid a deficit model which prevents young people from fulfilling their full potential. In September 2022, The Education Operational Delivery Committee endorsed the establishment of two Edge of Care pilots as a local response to The Promise.

3.12.2 Careful consideration of The Promise helped colleagues from across Integrated Children and Family Services, Early Intervention & Community Empowerment and City Growth to plan positive approaches to be piloted over the school session.

3.12.3 There was a strong sense that staff teams needed to be empowered to think creatively and consider the needs of children and families more holistically. Given the importance placed on the culture of those working across the two pilots, a set of guiding principles were agreed to drive different ways of working. These included:

- Multi-disciplinary teams should be established and based in both Associated School Groups (ASGs)(based at the Academies) who are trusted and empowered to test and refine the operating model over the lifetime of the pilot.
- That the focus of the pilot should be on children, young people and families and not narrowly focus on children and young people.
- That families should be empowered to tell their stories and their voices should strongly guide the development and evaluation of the operating models.
- That the pilots should progress independently of each other but with regular opportunities to share and learn from each other.
- That all members of the team are equal partners and any attempt to constrain should be challenged by any member of the team.
- That direct support for children and families should be available at the location that best meets the needs of the child or family.
- That the model should be year round and not impacted by school holiday periods.

ESTABLISHING THE PILOTS

3.12.4 Bases were established at Northfield and Lochside Academies over summer 2022 and key staff roles identified. Where staff could be immediately relocated this was progressed, and other posts were recruited to. In real terms, this meant that there was a delay in establishing both teams fully and both pilots have only had a full complement of staff for the last 7 months. This hampered early progress.

3.12.5 A Teams Site was established to share information and fortnightly meetings organised so that Chief Officers would be available to remove barriers and provide general support and guidance to the two teams.

3.12.6 The Guiding Principles clearly stated that the two pilots should evolve independently of each other in order to encourage creativity and innovation. Some Officers found this more challenging and it was agreed to try to separate the two pilots more fully and ask Chief Officers to share emerging best practice where appropriate. Taking this approach ensured that solutions were designed for the cohort of learners being supported through the pilot.

DELIVERY OF THE PILOTS

3.12.7 *“Regardless of how children and family’s voices are heard, there must be a full and considered exploration of how listening, shared sense-making and shared decision-making will be embedded into practice and mechanisms to actively use what is heard, must be put in place”* The Promise.

3.12.8 Following the initial identification of young people by senior leaders in Education and Children’s Social Work, the pilot team brought together information to build a more informed understanding of need, this included building relationships with the families to understand their situation more fully. As the pilot has progressed and relationships have been built, plans for young people have become more bespoke in response to the critical insight gleaned from families and the young people.

3.12.9 The pilot teams at each location met on a frequent (weekly) basis to share information and insights and the progress of each young person and their family. This approach ensured that the young person and family didn’t experience the need to repeatedly tell their story. This has also enabled the support offer to be adjusted to meet changing needs and ensure a timely response to new referrals.

3.12.10 From the outset the pilots recognised the criticality of how young people and families were engaged with. Connecting with the learning gained via the Fit Like Service, staff adopted a relational and trauma informed approach. This ensured that the support offer for each young person was based around the barriers they identified to being able to engage in education. Interventions are therefore individualised and have included:

- play-based support and structured work to explore feelings and emotions.
- supporting parents to understand the impact of feelings on behaviours, academic input (literacy / numeracy/ASDAN(Awards scheme development and Accreditation Network) awards/ dynamic youth awards).
- liaising with schools adapting timetables, strategies and other supports,
- activities including sport, working with others and managing relationships.
- families are supported to access weekly community connection sessions, financial support, support to access health services.

3.12.11 As the pilots progressed, the benefit of a weekly meeting between a key school link and the pilot team became apparent with a notable positive impact on transitions around school where these structures were in place. This practice has been now been replicated across both settings.

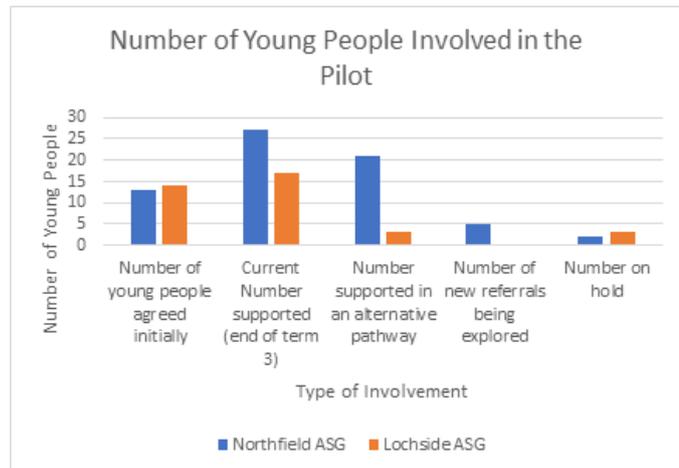
3.12.12 Young people engaging in the pilots are keen to share they feel listened to and value having an adult they can trust to talk to. Families tell us they value having someone who is seen to be neutral in terms of school and other agencies. As the pilot has progressed positive relationships have been built up allowing

families to be more honest about the issues being experienced at home and allowing staff to target support more successfully.

EVALUATION OF CORE MEASURES AND INDICATORS

3.12.13 The core measures identified to measure impact were the number of young people involved in the pilot, attendance at pilot sessions, exclusions and the number of VPD reports (Vulnerable Person Database). Consideration was also given to a number of indicators that would give an indication of progress towards more positive outcomes.

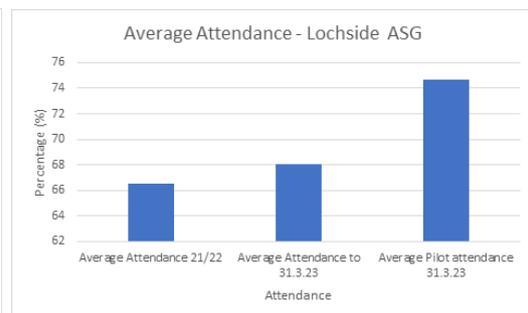
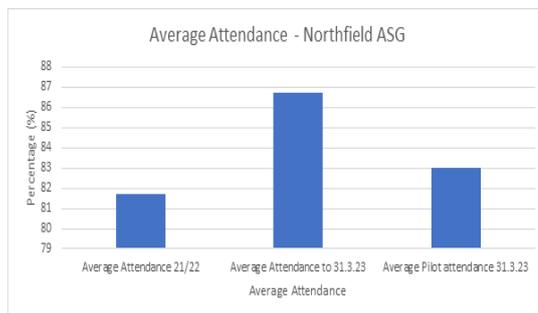
3.12.14 The number of young people engaging with the pilots has varied over time according to assessed need. Since September 2022, 68 young people have been supported across both ASGs.



3.12.15 Where it was agreed in consultation with staff, young people and families that the pilot was not the most appropriate intervention the family have been supported to access an alternative support. This has included more focused support through the Virtual School (8), Fit Like Family Wellbeing Service (8), RAFT (Reaching Aberdeen Families Together – 5 charties in a single service)(2), Craigielea (see 3.28 below) (2), Employment (2) or revised supports in school (1). This highlights the need to view the pilots as part of a wider model (or continuum) of Family Support and accept that no one model will work for all children and families.

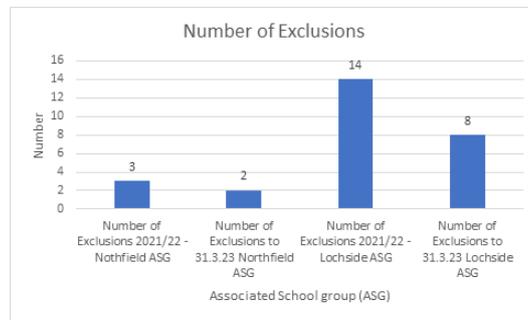
Attendance

3.12.16 Average attendance for young people engaged in the pilot has improved against levels from the previous session across both schools. In most cases this increase in attendance is thought to be due to a key worker being on site and available to the young person should they require support.



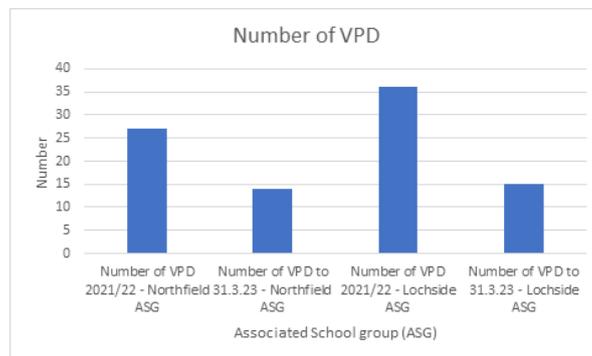
Exclusions

3.12.17 The number of exclusions for young people engaged in the pilot has reduced since the pilot began and this can be attributed to the positive relationships developed and resultant changes being made to the offer available in schools.



Vulnerable Person Database Reports

- 3.1218 As young people have engaged with the pilot there has been a reduction in the number of VPD reports school has received in connection with their behaviour in the community. This could be related to the increase in attendance at pilot sessions however it is too soon to draw firm conclusions given that the pilots have only been fully operational from December 2022.



Impact on family engagement/participation

- 3.12.19 A core principle of the pilot is to adopt a whole family approach. This acknowledges that parents whose children may be struggling to engage with their learning often have unmet needs of their own. A key recurring theme from engagement with families has been the need to mitigate the impact of poverty. Ensuring families are accessing their full benefit entitlement and recognising the importance of food within the work with young people has been critical.
- 3.12.20 Evidence throughout the pilots would suggest parents have been willing to engage in the support offer from pilot staff. There have been no refusals from young people or their families to engage, signalling a clear appetite for this more integrated support offer. Feedback from staff also suggests that adopting a “family first” perspective to framing the support offer allows the young person/parents to develop greater levels of trust and confidence.
- 3.12.21 Pilot staff have recognised the challenged relationships families may have had with schools or with social work. The broader dimension of the pilot team to include family learning and youth work has provided opportunities to reset relationships with Local Authority staff and for family members to engage in their child’s support plan.

Improving the wellbeing of families

- 3.12.22 A key principle of the pilots was to ensure a whole family and relational approach to supporting children and young people. This approach recognises that unless cognisance is given to the needs of all family members or how a young person is managing in their community these factors are likely to have

an adverse impact on their capacity to engage in their learning. Attending to the emotional and psychological wellbeing of parents gives validity to their needs and concerns. It also enables the building of parental capacity and the capacity of the young person to problem solve future challenges and in turn reduce future demand on services. Feedback from parents and staff reflects positively on the impact of this approach.

“Parent H continues to reach out for support from pilot staff and has shared that she sees the benefit in ongoing support for her and H”. Pilot staff supported H and A together to work through disagreements; modelling how to manage conflict and share thoughts and feelings effectively and appropriately”.

Parent “The fact that they are going (out) with you is a big step for both of them as they can take a while to trust people. The fact they have attached themselves to you is a big step. In the morning we always pre- warn the children if there are people coming or if they are going home with anyone. When I said R was picking them up today, they both went Yay”.

Families in the need of statutory intervention

- 3.12.23 *“Care experienced children and young people will receive all they need to thrive at school. There will be no barriers to their engagement with education”*
Independent Care Review
- 3.12.24 One of the key identified outcomes from the pilot was to build effective scaffolding around young people and their families to enable them to remain within their family, school and community. The development of the two Pilots recognised there was a gap in the continuum of support for young people with an escalating profile of need and vulnerability. Looking at the needs of the young people across both pilots, a clear distinction can be drawn between the needs of both communities. The level of deprivation and generational trauma known to exist within some families in the Northfield community was a key factor in the distinction. This further highlights the inextricable link between child poverty and vulnerability.
- 3.12.25 Not all of the young people involved in the pilots are open cases to Children’s Social Work and only a small number of the young people in the Lochside Pilot had a risk profile that would indicate a future risk that their needs would be considered to be on the ‘edges of care’ or could not be met within their family network. The risk profile for the young people included in the Northfield Pilot was considerably different (higher) with many already having multi-agency plans intended to mitigate the risk of them being removed from their family network. Consequently, the needs and vulnerability of some of the young people initially identified for inclusion in the Northfield Pilot were quickly assessed as requiring support beyond the capacity of the pilot. This learning has been beneficial to informing which young people would benefit most from inclusion in the pilot and providing a sense of where this support should sit within our continuum of Family Support.
- 3.12.26 For the small number of young people whose needs were deemed beyond the capacity of the pilot they have been supported to engage with the Craigielea Service. This is a integrated social work and education service to provide an alternative to care support offer to young people and their families. This provides a further helpful insight as we consider our full continuum of support.

- 3.12.27 It is highly encouraging that to date none of the young people who have engaged in the pilots have required to be accommodated out with their family.
- 3.12.28 The risks faced by a very small number of children involved in the pilots required their names to be placed to be on the Child Protection Register (CPR). Over the course of their involvement in the Pilot, this additional support along with wider multi-agency intervention has contributed to their names being removed from the CPR.
- 3.12.29 The professional assessment of risk faced by children and families is a continuous process based on ever changing circumstances. Parental engagement with support agencies is a critical factor in assessing and managing risk. The positive levels of engagement demonstrated by parents and young people involved in the pilot is enabling them to better understand why professionals have concerns about their wellbeing.

LESSONS LEARNED AGAINST THE 5 PROBLEM STATEMENTS

- 3.12.30 Five problem statements were agreed to guide the work of the pilots. The statements have been used to frame the learning taken from the pilots at this stage.

How do we organise ourselves differently to build stronger relationships with each other?

- 3.12.31 The hypothesis that by working on an integrated basis we can build stronger relationships with each other has been strongly evidenced over the course of the pilot to date. As you would expect with any new way of working, there have been issues and myths/assumptions to be worked through. Although all staff involved in the pilots came from a background of working with children, young people and families, they recognised that despite this commonality the restrictions of their respective professional disciplines and boundaries could easily be a barrier to effective interagency working.
- 3.12.32 Rightly staff have invested time to thinking through key issues – ensuring a common understanding about use of language, clarity on roles and responsibilities and how they can grow as a ‘team’. This time is enabling them to safely and effectively explore how they can ‘blur the boundaries’ of professional roles/disciplines, ensuring a child led and relational approach. The team regularly come together to share information but also to work through common challenges. The process of problem solving has in itself contributed to building relationships.
- 3.12.33 Additionally, some of the other benefits of co-location and integrated working include;
- identifying relationships with families that siloed working had not brought visibility to
 - Dispelling professional myths and stereotypes
 - Strengthening an understanding of professional roles
 - Enabling interventions with children and families without escalating to lead professional
 - Families not identifying staff by their role but by the support they provide.

How can we improve our shared use of data to identify and track those at greatest risk to inform decision making and this pilot?

- 3.12.34 The challenge of sharing data in relation to young people and families has been a perennial challenge for agencies. This results in data about the same child and family being held across multiple systems. This in turn places huge demand on already very stretched professionals to devote considerable time to communicate regularly but in reality, no one member of the team around the family can know all the information. This challenge is recognised within the proposed National Care Service which emphasises the need for a single health and social care record.
- 3.12.35 Within the pilot while there is still a need for pilot staff to record information in their own standalone systems – SEEMIS; D365 etc. staff have developed a shared and secure recording system which allows information to be shared across disciplines enabling all staff to have cognisance of events/changes within a child or young person’s circumstances. It is also enabling data to be considered in a more holistic manner and to record progress or where concerns are escalating.
- 3.12.36 The pilot has developed a range of data capturing opportunities. It was agreed that impact was best evidenced by both quantitative and qualitative data appreciating that it is not always possible or appropriate to convert qualitative data into a quantitative measure. For many of our children and families, the qualitative data at times was more powerful in evidencing impact as it described their journey which over a short period of time could not be as well represented quantitatively. The case studies in Appendix A provide an insight into the impact on the pilots on individual families to date.

How can we remove rigid thresholds and have a clearer understanding of the needs of children and families and swifter access to available resources?

- 3.12.37 Central to the work of the pilots was establishing links with wider supports already in place around the family. For those children already receiving a package of intensive support, the addition of the pilot was seen to work less well. It added an element of confusion and feeling of being overwhelmed by family members. This feedback resulted in pilot staff working with those already involved with the family to ensure the support offer was clear.

“Regardless of how children and family’s voices are heard, there must be a full and considered exploration of how listening, shared sense-making and shared decision-making will be embedded into practice and mechanisms to actively use what is heard, must be put in place” The Promise

- 3.12.38 A key strand to the success of the pilot was ensuring an identified point of contact within the senior management team of each of the two pilot schools. This was seen to have many benefits:

- Ownership of the pilots within the school support offer.
- Early and coordinated identification of ‘new’ young people who might benefit from the pilot.
- Clear messaging and engagement with the wider school structure as to the role of the pilot.
- A clear and accessible point of contact to escalate concerns and celebrate successes.

- 3.12.39 Based on engagement with multi-agency staff and taking the learning from delivering the 'vulnerable wellbeing hubs', a conscious decision was taken not to overly define the support offer of the pilots or how they would work. This has enabled the pilots to develop organically in response to the needs of the young people and their families. It has also supported a blurring of roles, ensuring a relational approach is taken to supporting young people and families.
- 3.12.40 Having a multi-agency team in situ in and around the academies has enabled opportunities for in-depth discussions about a child/family that is wider than education. This has included health, social work, money advice services and family support. Ensuring close contact with the Fit Like Service (Early Intervention) to ensure that the most appropriate level of support is offered to families has reduced the need for multiple referrals and reducing the time for support to be mobilised.

How do we ensure greater continuity of staffing and support the wellbeing of those consistent staff more effectively?

- 3.12.41 The pilot is designed to provide young people with support 52 weeks of the year. Our children, young people and families have told us that they would welcome access to all year-round support.
- 3.12.42 Due to the nature of the pilot, recruitment has proved to be a challenge both at the start and as the pilot progressed. Staff retention is an issue due to the fixed term nature of contracts with a few staff opting to move to opportunities that offered a permanent contract. This has impacted on the support offered through the pilot as well as impacting on relationships built with families and young people. However, by ensuring there is more than one positive relationship established with members of the team and the young person and family this has mitigated against this dynamic.
- 3.12.43 Social work, Youth Work and Family Learning staff receive supervision through their immediate line manager as well as being integrated within their wider pilot team. This supports both their wellbeing, professional development and adherence to individual service guidelines. Although formal supervision is not undertaken within education, colleagues are supported by line managers with continual reflection on progress of the pilot.

How do we improve our collective ability to hear the voices of children, young people and families more clearly and share information more effectively with each other?

- 3.12.44 From the outset the pilots have worked to ensure the children, young people and families were central to shaping their own support offer. This has resulted in personalised support offers reflective of individual needs and circumstances. It also recognised that the needs of the young people across the two pilots had broad variation and a one size fits all would not have worked.
- 3.12.45 The voice of the young people has continued to be captured through ongoing discussions with pilot staff and this has fed into the weekly discussions and variation to support plans. This aligns to the Scottish Approach to Service Design and The Promise – *“At all stages in the process of change, what matters to children and families must be the focus. Organisations will be able to demonstrate that they are operating from their perspective rather than the perspective internal to the ‘system’”*.

3.12.46 The overarching measures for the pilot were 'engagement' and 'achievement' with both qualitative and quantitative data being gathered to evidence impact. The direct feedback from families confirms they have felt listened to and staff have worked to establish respectful and enabling relationships.

"I think that the supports that have been put in place to help my daughter get the education she deserves is fantastic, I think finally people around us are starting to understand my daughter's specific needs and I can't tell you how good this is. I have been struggling on my own for months and I finally feel I have support and a voice, and I am able to help my daughter meet her potential."

HIGH LEVEL ANALYSIS TO DATE

3.12.47 The Pilots have been operational since November 2022. Our evaluation of their impact to date, while still evolving, indicates that they have largely been positive. There are encouraging indicators that the pilots are having a positive impact on the lives of the young people and families. This can be seen through a range of quantitative and qualitative data which indicates improvements in relation to levels of 'engagement' and 'achievement'. (Appendix B provides three qualitative case studies detailing the impact of the pilots.)

3.12.48 The learning and feedback from young people and families would indicate that the 'pilots' offer valuable support to young people and families who have an escalating need and risk profile, beyond the early intervention support offered by the Fit Like Service but not yet requiring intensive intervention. Adopting a whole family approach has been essential. It is also recognised that levels of need and risk are not static. How we support families move up and down the continuum of support without experiencing multiple changes of people supporting them, continues to be an area to worked through.

3.12.49 Feedback from staff working in the pilots, strongly supports the value of a colocated and integrated approach to delivering early and enhanced support to young people and their families. Adopting a relational approach, staff have been able to form positive and effective relationships with the families to facilitate change. They are often viewed differently by family members, not necessarily by the title on their ID Badge which in turn is supporting creative ways of working and a blurring of traditional roles and responsibilities.

3.12.50 As noted above the data supports that the five identified 'problem statements' have helped to guide and inform an iterative development of the pilots. It is right that each pilot operates according to the needs of their ASG. However, it is also apparent that learning is being shared so there is broad alignment to the delivery model.

3.12.51 We are conscious that the pilots have only been operating for two full terms and would propose to extend the 'test and learn' phase until the end of 2023. This will provide for a stronger evidence base to determine their impact of the pilots and to inform how we scale up and sustain their future role and remit.

RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS

3.12.52 The shape and delivery model of the pilots are, understandably after only seven months, still evolving. To draw definitive conclusions at this stage would be premature. It is therefore recommended that we continue with the 'test and learn' stage to consider the learning over a whole year. This will allow

consideration to be given to how the pilots support young people through key transition points and over the summer holidays.

- 3.12.53 During the coming months consideration will be given to how we adjust the current model to give a greater level of certainty to staff, some of whom are on temporary contracts, and naturally have been looking for greater security to their employment status. A stable team will allow for more certainty to the planning for individual young people and the pilots as a whole. Additionally, it will be important to consider how other partners could contribute to the support offer for young people and their families.
- 3.12.54 The pilots operate within a continuum of supports available to young people and their families. Some of the young people identified as potentially benefiting from the pilot have had needs beyond the capacity of the pilots. This has supported our understanding of which children would benefit most from inclusion in the pilots.
- 3.12.55 As noted the role and remit of the pilots was not overly defined at the outset to allow for the staff delivering them to shape the support offer with young people and families. While this has been positive it is recognised that as we move forward sharing the evaluation of the pilots with colleagues across the partnership will be important to their continuous evolution.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Scottish Government has committing to investing £500m of the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund (WFWF) to support to scale innovative family support practice and build capacity across the system. The central aspiration of the fund is to ensure that the aims of the Promise are met to ensure that families receive the right help, at the right time and in the right place.
- 4.2 In 2022/23 £50m will be distributed. This includes £32m to support local Children Service Planning Partnerships (CSPPs) to build capacity for whole system change and to scale up and drive holistic whole family support services.
- 4.3 The Scottish Government have confirmed that the £32m is a multi-year commitment up to 2025/26. Aberdeen City Council's share of this funding is £1.025m per year. The funding is to be spent and delivered according to the collective agreement and direction of the local CSPP with accountability resting with the Children's Services Board.
- 4.4 The total cost of the pilot (£218,102) is being met through Scottish Attainment Challenge - Strategic Equity Funding.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 provides that children should be provided with support in a way which safeguards, supports or promotes their wellbeing. Support should be provided in a manner that ensures that any action to meet need is provided at the earliest appropriate time and proportionate to need. Intervention should aim to prevent needs arising or escalating to a point where compulsory measures are required. The Promise promotes that support should be provided in an integrated manner and delivered in accordance with the ten principles of intensive family support.

- 5.2 The Children (Scotland) Act 1995 provides the primary legal framework for social work intervention in the lives of children, young people and their families. It is aligned to the principles of the UNCRC and has three core principles a) the child's views should be taken into account in decisions that affect their lives; b) the welfare of the child is the paramount consideration and c) no court or hearing should make an order, unless to do so would be better for the child than making no order at all. These principles continue to stand as we develop the Family Support Model and the Edge of Care Pilots.
- 5.3 The Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000 places a duty on Education Authorities to secure that education is directed to the development of the personality, talents and mental and physical abilities of the child or young person to their fullest potential and in carrying out this duty to have due regard to the views of children and young people.
- 5.3 The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 places a duty on the Authority to make adequate and efficient provision for supporting children and young people with additional support needs.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Only positive environmental impacts have been identified. On-going promotion of pupil voice and their participation in decision making will help develop citizens who consider environmental implications in later life.

7. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H) *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
Strategic Risk	Risk of not targeting the correct group of young people and therefore increasing the number of young people outwith the care of their families	Multiagency working to ensure a complete profile of needs is created for all families being considered for the pilot.	L	Yes
Compliance	No risks identified			

Operational	Risk of high turnover of staff and families not receiving a consistent approach	Clear records of all activities undertaken with families. Relationships built with more than one worker.	L	Yes
Financial	Risk of staff costs increasing	Budget allows for staff salary increases	L	Yes
Reputational	Risk of young people not engaging with the service and families having no support	Mechanisms in place to check if the service is meeting the needs of the family	L	Yes
Environment / Climate	No risks identified			

8. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</u>	
<u>Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan</u>	
Prosperous Economy	Increase support for those who have been most disadvantaged through the pandemic by 2023.
Prosperous People Stretch Outcome (Children & Young People)	<p>The detail within this report supports the delivery of Children & Young People Stretch Outcomes 4 to 9 in the refreshed LOIP. This includes the following projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of care experienced young people by 10% receiving multiagency throughcare/aftercare support by 2023 • Increase number of young people who need support in relation to trauma and bereavement having access to such support by 50% by 2023. • By 2025, 90% of families with children with an additional support need or disability will indicate that they have access to peer and community support that meets their needs • Reduce by 15% the number of instances of youth anti-social behaviour calls to Police Scotland by 2025. • 75% of identified multi-agency staff reporting confidence in identifying and taking action on harm by 2026.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the % of learners entering a positive and sustained destination to be ahead of the Virtual Comparator for all groups by 2025. • Reduce by 20% the number of care experienced young people charged with an offence by 2025.
Prosperous People (Adults) Stretch Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To decrease the number of 13 and 15 year olds who have reported using substances in Aberdeen to below the national average by 2023, through curriculum delivery and a whole population approach. •
<p>Regional and City Strategies</p> <p>Regional Cultural Strategy Prevention Strategy Children's Services Plan National Improvement Framework Plan</p>	The universal provision of education is fully aligned to the Prevention Strategy and a key partner to the Children's Services Plan.

9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Integrated Impact Assessment	Not required
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required
Other	None

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

11. APPENDICES

Appendix A Child Poverty Report
Appendix B – Edge of Care Pilot - Case studies

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