

# Early Childhood and Family Service

**Scrutiny  
Committee**

December 2020

# Today

- An opportunity to review progress in mobilising the new Early Childhood and Family Service and in developing wider system working to support families with children aged 0-5 years.
- Consideration of what has gone well.
- Exploration of aspects that require further development.
- To identify any particular issues or themes members want us to report back on to the sub-committee in the future.

# Progress

- Norfolk's Early Childhood and Family Service (ECFS) was successfully launched on 1 October 2019. This consists of:
  - Commissioned preventative service providing targeted support to families who need extra help
  - Support for local community groups to develop local activities and provision for families with children aged 0-5
  - An enhanced digital offer including online and telephone support
  - Strengthened joint working and partnership arrangements as part of a whole system response in Norfolk to early childhood

## What has gone well – targeted support

- Award of the contract to Action for Children in April 2019 and their subsequent work to successfully transfer 139 staff from nine providers into the new service on 1 October 2019.
- Community, stakeholder and family engagement events which enabled us to gain meaningful feedback about what was important to them as part of mobilising the new service.
- Action for Children have exceeded our expectation that at least 60% of the service budget would be used for frontline delivery.
- During the first 6 months, Action for Children's delivery included a mixture of universal and targeted activities with over 600 families receiving one-to-one support in a variety of locations, including in families' own homes, in addition to group sessions, 65% of which were operating in 74 different outreach venues.

## Current situation – targeted support

- The Early Childhood and Family Service has been able to offer a resilient response during the Covid-19 pandemic. Action for Children have maintained direct face to face contact where it is safe to do so, and alongside this, have successfully made use of digital and telephone support.
- Currently there are 622 families (870 children) receiving targeted casework support from Action for Children.
- Covid restrictions have limited the number of groups operating and the service has prioritised one-to-one support. As restrictions ease, Action for Children will be opening up more groups.
- Action for Children are using an 'Outcomes Star' to work with families to measure progress, alongside use of a range of evidence-based interventions. 83% of families either fully or partly achieve their outcomes.
- Service user feedback indicates 96% would recommend the service to other families, with 79% reporting that the service got involved at the right time. 97% found the workers helpful with 86% feeling they were given all the support they needed.

# What has gone well – supporting community groups

- Joint working between the Early Childhood and Family Service and our Communities and Partnerships teams, early years settings, and members of the newly established Early Childhood Advisory Boards.
- The six locality Early Childhood Advisory Boards provide a local forum for services and agencies focused on early childhood outcomes and members of the boards are working together to identify ways to target and support local organisations to expand their service delivery.
- In the first 6 months, we were able to support additional local community led support for families through 23 parent and toddler groups via the early childhood community fund.

## What has gone well – enhanced digital and online support

- Norfolk County Council successfully launched the Early Childhood and Family Service web pages <http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/earlychildhood> prior to the new service going live in October 2019.
- Pages include clear and seamless links across to online self-care information, advice and resources created on the Healthy Child Programme's innovative 'Just One Norfolk' platform, as well as information about community activities and groups held in the Norfolk Community Directory.
- Regular meetings involving ECFS, the Healthy Child Programme, the Library Service, Public Health and our Family Information Service have led to shared digital messages.
- Action for Children have developed local ECFS Facebook pages which are proving very effective for communication by families.

## What has gone well – strengthening joint working and partnership arrangements

- Children's Services successfully led a partnership bid for Norfolk to be part of a new national Early Years Transformation Academy (EYTA), facilitated by the Early Intervention Foundation.
- Frontline practitioners are working together more effectively, developing shared pathways for families, and prioritising families in greatest need. This includes a new joint referral pathway for children with speech, language and communication needs that was praised by Ofsted in the recent Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) inspection.
- The recent 'Talk and Play' and 'protecting babies' campaigns as part of the Safeguarding Children Partnership Covid-19 recovery plan.
- Embedding of family networking approaches within ECFS's targeted family support work.
- Close working between ECFS, Healthy Child Programme staff, midwifery and early years settings to align targeted support.
- The Library Service has refined and developed its early childhood offer, linking with ECFS.
- An early childhood population data dashboard focused on impact and outcomes is under development and will be key tool for the Advisory Boards.



# Areas for development

- Providing training and development to improve Action for Children's accuracy of case recording and the quality of case records.
- Using service user feedback more effectively to improve services, especially with families who decide the service is not right for them.
- Increasing the number of families being worked with, including through providing more group sessions as these become easier to safely deliver.
- Supporting the development of more community-led groups, especially as Covid 19 restrictions ease.
- Embedding use of the data dashboard to assist the Early Childhood Advisory Boards to assess local needs, map existing provision and identify local priorities.
- Improving parental engagement to gain better insight into their experiences and how to reach families that may need our help.
- Working with partners to address emerging needs as a result of the impact of Covid-19 on families with children aged under 5.