

# Report

Report to:	<b>Social Work Resources Committee</b>
Date of Meeting:	<b>6 March 2024</b>
Report by:	<b>Director, Health and Social Care</b>

Subject:	<b>Family Support Strategy – Family Support Hubs</b>
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## 1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ◆ provide the committee with an update on the family support strategy within Social Work Resources to deliver earlier, more preventative, strengths-based help and support to families, preventing escalation to care and protection proceedings
- ◆ update the committee on national and local drivers informing the Strategy, including the Promise Plan 2021-2024 and the Whole Family Wellbeing Strategy, which aim to develop and enhance earlier help and family support services
- ◆ update the committee on the first year of service delivery from Social Work's Family Support Hubs and outline the priorities for future service developments

## 2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) that the progress made in the delivery of the Promise Plan 2021-2024 and the development of a Whole Family Wellbeing Strategy be noted; and
- (2) that the year one annual report, attached at Appendix 1, and the progress made in shifting resources to community based support that aim to enhance earlier help and family support services be noted.

## 3. Background

3.1. An Executive Committee Report titled 'Family Support Strategy and Whole Family Wellbeing Funding' was presented and endorsed in March 2023. The report highlighted the background to the development of a Family Support Strategy and updated the Executive Committee on the national and local drivers informing the Strategy including the #KeepthePromise Plan 2021-2024 known as 'The Plan' and funding aligned to develop and enhance earlier help and family support services. The Promise identified the need to significantly upscale family support services and identified whole family support as a priority in The Plan 2021-2024. There is a clear ambition that children and families should be able to access preventative, needs-based support when they need it, for as long as they need it. By supporting families at their time of need rather than at crisis point will enable them to flourish and reduce the chances of family breakdown and of children entering the care system.

3.2. In response to this, the Scottish Government committed to investing £500m Whole Family Wellbeing Funding (WFWF) over the lifetime of the Parliament to support the whole system transformational change required to reduce the need for crisis intervention, and to shift investment towards prevention and early intervention. The funding awarded to South Lanarkshire is £1.827m per annum.

3.3. South Lanarkshire's implementation of the Whole Family Wellbeing Strategy is progressing well to build capacity to improve preventive services and early support to families. The model is part of our delivery commitment for Keeping the Promise - holistic family support and ensuring connectivity to other relevant policy areas; Community Access to Mental Health, Child Poverty, Alcohol and Drug Whole Family Support and Shaping Places for wellbeing. See Appendix one that highlights the progress and successes of year one.

3.4. A key feature of our approach so far has been the reconfiguration of our social work family support workforce to create four locality family support hubs. The community facing hubs have assisted in creating a 'no wrong door approach' to family support and facilitated a means to strengthen GIRFEC pathways between social work and universal, community and third sector partners to as far as possible divert families from statutory intervention. When required family support is provided from hub staff to prevent escalation to our local office teams and divert from care and protection proceedings.

#### **4. Family Support Hubs**

4.1 Social Work in South Lanarkshire formally launched locality-based Family Support Hubs in September 2022 following a year of testing the model on a smaller scale. The service priorities and improvement measures are aligned to the Children's Services Planning Partnership's implementation of the Whole Family Wellbeing Strategy.

4.2. The Whole Family Wellbeing Strategy is a partnership approach between health, education, social work and the third sector. Most families will receive the help and support they require from universal services and third sector but for some children and young people there will be a need for social work to respond in accordance with the local authority's statutory duty under section 22 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995, to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

4.3. Family Support Hubs have been established in South Lanarkshire to provide the early social work response to pregnant women, babies, children and young people up to 18 years to prevent an escalation to statutory teams by providing intensive whole family support.

4.4. The Family Support Hubs are community facing and accessible provisions based in Hamilton, East Kilbride, Lanark and Cambuslang localities. The Hub teams consist of social workers and family support staff. Each hub also has peer workers and Children 1<sup>st</sup> workers collocated to offer families a wide range of different types of support with a shared remit of providing whole family support that prevents crisis, reduces inequalities and improves child development, family functioning and wellbeing.

#### **5. Impact**

5.1. In the first year of operation, the Family Support Hubs have responded to 61% of the total referrals to Children and Family Social Work. This significantly decreases the volume of initial assessments being undertaken by Local Office teams and has created more capacity within this part of the system to respond to child protection referrals and care experienced children. Allocations to our local office teams in 2023 were reduced by almost 6800 compared to allocations in 2021.

- 5.2. All vulnerable pregnancy referrals are held by the Family Support Hubs unless older siblings are open allocations to Local Offices. The aim is that by positioning the pregnancy related work within the Family Support Hubs there will be less babies cared for away from family either at birth or in early infancy as more timely assessment and holistic whole family intensive support can be offered that will reduce risk and strengthen protective factors for the families.
- 5.3. In an effort to reduce the use of child protection procedures, the Hamilton Family Support Hub has introduced a parent plan approach for vulnerable pregnancies. This approach still ensures there is early identification and response to risk and safeguarding concerns through a robust assessment and review process using a GIRFEC approach. This has been successful with only four out of fifteen parents' plans escalating to child protection procedures in the last year. This approach will be upscaled across the other four Hubs in year two.
- 5.4. Twenty five pre-birth child protection assessments have been undertaken by the Family Support Hubs in the first year, three have progressed to alternative care arrangements. This is compared to ten pre-birth child protection assessments undertaken by the Local Office teams where seven have progressed to alternative care arrangements. The care arrangement data for babies is being tracked until babies turn one year old to help us understand the longer-term outcomes of the child protection pre-birth work being undertaken within the Family Support Hubs and Local Offices. However it should be noted that the Hubs assess all new pre-birth assessments for families not previously known to Social Work whilst the localities assess existing clients where children and families are known due to previous vulnerabilities.
- 5.5. Family Group Decision Making has been aligned to the vulnerable pregnancy work within the Family Support Hubs. This was following a period of testing to determine where this approach would have most impact. Family Group Decision Making is offered to families that are at risk of their situation escalating to child protection or looked after procedures, at the earliest stage possible. This approach is expected to empower families to make their own plan to safeguard their child.
- 5.6. During consultation families said that staff with relevant lived experience should be embedded within the Family Support Hubs. An application was submitted to the Corra Foundation's Child and Family Fund and £487,340 was awarded to recruit 3.5 full time equivalent peer workers for a minimum of 5 years with the overall aim of reducing the impact of parental drug or alcohol use. The initial ambition was that the peer workers would support fifty parents within the first year but have already exceeded this number within six months due to it being received positively both by parents and social work colleagues.
- 5.7. A reflective Practice Co-ordinator is aligned to the hubs to support trauma informed practice amongst staff. In year two, a Trauma Recovery Counsellor will be aligned. This provision will contribute to the realisation of delivery of preventative whole family support. Families will have access to this specialist intervention before the situation has escalated. The Counsellor will work directly with families, as an early intervention approach in line with local and national priority.

5.8. A Parenting Support Groupwork Pathway has been expanded to include support for parents with children aged 0-18 years. These programs include evidence-based and accredited programs and for those parents not requiring additional or intensive groupwork programs, the pathway has been expanded to include Family Support Hub specific groupwork programs to provide general parenting and wellbeing support, a positive social experience and an opportunity for parents to engage with their local Family Support Hub.

5.9. Engagement and feedback from families has been a clear indicator of impact. Families have shared their positive experiences of support delivered from the Family Support Hubs. This feedback is detailed in Appendix 1, annual report. Notably, families reported that supports were available at the right time for them, that the approach was caring and supportive and assisted them in overcoming obstacles and trauma to improve their situation.

## **6. Employee Implications**

6.1. There are no employee Implications of associated with this report.

## **7. Financial Implications**

7.1. There are no financial implications associated with this report and the £1.827m funding for the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund is utilised to pay for the additional posts associated with the Family Support Hubs. These were previously reported in the Executive Committee report dated 1 March 2023 titled Family Support Strategy and Whole Family Wellbeing Funding.

7.2. The Scottish Government have confirmed to local authorities that this funding is secure until March 2026. In the event that funding is not confirmed from March 2026 onwards, the Council along with partners will, following the ongoing review of the Whole Family Wellbeing developments, look to either establish a new model of delivery within existing resources or redesign services in line with core budget allocations. It is anticipated that this will not pose a significant financial risk as with the turnover of staff budget pressures could be consumed as part of a redesign with vacant posts. This will be done at the earliest stage available in line with future budgetary allocations.

## **8. Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications**

8.1. There are no implications for climate change, sustainability, or the environment in terms of the information contained in this report.

## **9. Other Implications**

9.1. There are no risk implications associated with this report.

## **10. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements**

10.1. There is no requirement for an equality impact assessment and consultation arrangements.

**Professor Soumen Sengupta**  
**Director, Health and Social Care**

1 February 2024

### **Link(s) to Council Values/Priorities/Outcomes**

- ◆ focused on people and their needs
- ◆ working with and respecting others
- ◆ our children and young people thrive
- ◆ people live healthiest lives possible
- ◆ we will work to put people first and reduce inequality

### **Previous References**

- ◆ Executive Committee report dated 1 March 2023: Family Support Strategy and Whole Family Wellbeing Funding

### **List of Background Papers**

- South Lanarkshire Family Group Decision Making Service – 1<sup>st</sup> year reporting 2022-2023
- Reflective Practice Initial Evaluation Report

### **Contact for Further Information**

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

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