

MEETING	Care Scrutiny Committee
DATE	1 February 2024
TITLE	Preventative work commissioned to the third sector by the Children and Supporting Families Department
PURPOSE	To share information about preventative work commissioned to the third sector that has been achieved and to provide assurance that the service is getting value for money.
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1. Background

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to share information about the work that has been achieved, and to also give assurance that we are getting value for money from the preventative work that is commissioned to the third sector by the Children and Supporting Families Department.
- 1.2 The two projects commissioned are part of the Families First programme in Gwynedd and correspond with the Welsh Government's Families First Programme Guidance (2017). Both projects are funded through grants.
- 1.3 The current projects which we have commissioned from 'Y Bont' and Barnardo's have been commissioned until March 2024, with the option to extend for another year but this has not yet been confirmed, as we have not received confirmation of the grant total for 2024-2025. The Department has been commissioning Y Bont and Barnardo's for several years, and we have a strong and positive relationship with them. Both organisations have a good relationship with residents in their communities and they are well-established in their local communities.
- 1.4 The Welsh Government is currently working on the Action Plan therefore we will have to wait for the plan to be introduced in order to assess the contents of the revised Plan, in case there are additional needs as a result. As a Service we will respond to the Welsh Government's requirements.

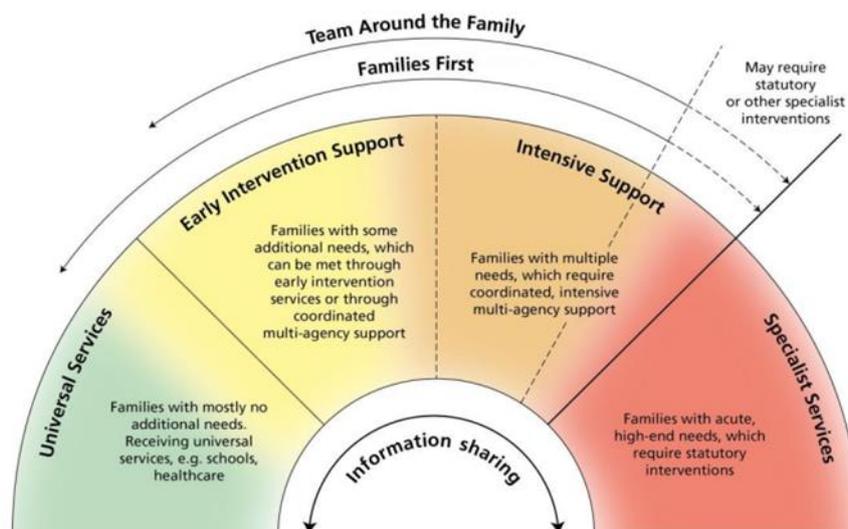
2. The Welsh Government's Action Plan – Families First

- 2.1 The main high-level outcomes for the project is noted in the '**Families First – Programme Guidance' (April 2017)** by the Welsh Government. The aim of Families First work is to provide early intervention and support to families. This is done by working alongside families to prevent or reduce adverse childhood experiences. Families First will also prevent and protect families and reduce the likelihood of more complex needs developing.
- 2.2 The programme is aiming to develop a joint Service with agencies to ensure there are no gaps in the Service and that no duplication occurs. The focus is on "investing to save" by operating in an efficient and effective manner through early intervention or prevention. It is important that good practice is shared and that lessons are learned through providing the Service. By developing a Service that improves families' lives in a positive way, it prevents and intervenes to put families first so they can thrive, and so that young people can reach their potential.
- 2.3 The work that Families First provides covers early intervention through to intensive intervention, and works on a multi-agency basis, but in situations where a family are in crisis,

a statutory service must be provided for these families. The statutory Service is provided within the Children and Supporting Families Department.

2.4 Please see the following diagram that portrays the elements that Families First provides:-

2.5 ¹



2.6 As is noted on the diagram, it shows how essential multi-agency collaboration is, and that there is continued communication when the intervention changes.

3. What type of work is being commissioned and what is the budget?

A Family Support Team for the Meirionnydd Area of Gwynedd – Families First

- 3.1 We have commissioned a Family Support Team for Meirionnydd, Families First from Barnardo's in order to provide the same Service that is being provided in the Arfon and Dwyfor area by a Family Support Team. There are two elements to this work, which are interventions and early intervention parenting programmes, and an evidence-based family support service for parents and families with children and young people between 5 and 25 years old.
- 3.2 The provision is delivered flexibly in a way that is suited and convenient to the parents / family's needs, whether in the home, virtually, over the phone or in a Family centre, according to the needs of parents and families. The element of supporting the family includes developing positive attitudes, aspirations and resilience, improving positive parenting skills and increasing parents' confidence and skills to provide a positive learning environment at home and help their child with learning.
- 3.3 The work also promotes parents' mental health and emotional well-being, and focuses on promoting and maintaining effective relationships within the family. This is achieved by improving the parent-child relationship and the relationship between parents, increasing parents' confidence in their parenting role, strengthening parents' understanding of child

1 Welsh Government (2017) *Families First Programme Guidance*.

development, supporting parents to have good mental health and supporting parents to have positive emotional well-being.

- 3.4 There are bespoke services for parents/families of children and young people in particular circumstances e.g. children/young people who are at risk of not being in education, employment or training (NEET), young people at risk of offending, children/young people who have additional learning needs, at risk of becoming homeless. The project helps to empower young people to act and participate actively in society, increase confidence and resilience, improve social and emotional well-being, improve young people's life opportunities, and promote mental health and well-being.
- 3.5 The preventative work offered also helps to build young people's ability to consider risk, make rational decisions and take control. It also develops positive attitudes by exploring behaviour and aspirations. Furthermore, it develops young people's ability to manage personal and social relationships. It will prevent needs from becoming more severe, and it protects young people from harm caused by exposure to ACEs and other similar experiences.
- 3.6 The annual value of this project is **£156,500**. This funding covers the salaries and running costs of the project. There are two full-time and two part-time members of staff working on this project.
- 3.7 Requests for the Service go through the Referrals Team, who will make a decision as to which services are most appropriate for the Family, and whether they are eligible to access the services. Following assessment, the case will transfer over to the Team around the Family, either for a single Service or for a Service coordinated by a coordinator (for the most complex cases that require more than one Service). They receive detailed reports to consider whether a family's case can be closed if progress has been shown by the family. Please see below a table that provides the number of referrals that have been received, and the number of individuals that Barnardo's have worked with to provide interventions from 2021-2023.

<u>Years</u>	<u>Number of Referrals</u>	<u>Number of Individuals</u>
2021-2022	87	130
2022-2023	203	384
April 2023 – December 2023	177	224

4. Family Support Service; Therapeutic, Counselling and Mediation Services

- 4.1 The project will be one of two specialist Family Support Services (FSS) projects and will provide specialist support to the three Family Support Teams (FST) that have just been developed in Gwynedd; Arfon, Dwyfor and Meirionnydd.
- 4.2 The work commissioned provides the following:-
 - Therapeutic counselling for children aged 10-19 years old based on nationally recognised Therapeutic and Counselling competencies, provided by appropriately trained staff.
 - Inter-parental Relationship Conflict Therapy based on nationally recognised Therapeutic and Counselling competencies, provided by appropriately trained staff.
 - Evidence-based interventions that use the recognised practice of Motivational Interviewing
 - Parent-Child Mediation (to include absent fathers)
 - Family Group Conference Programmes, based on evidence – these solve problems in the family that are impairing a family's ability to provide a stable and happy family home environment.

- Evidence-based counselling for children and young people who have experienced bereavement or the loss of important and influential adults in their lives.
- Person-centred counselling
- Evidence-based intervention programmes for fathers (abusive behaviour at home).

4.3 This is done through one-to-one work, group work, mediation and the group conference. Although some interventions should relate to theories that are based on the adults (the parents), the outcomes should focus on the child, giving full consideration to alleviating **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)**. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) means that a child has been exposed to the following in childhood – Alcohol and substance misuse, Physical, mental or sexual abuse and/or neglect, Domestic violence, Parental separation and/or family breakdown, Mental illness or imprisonment of parent.

4.4 We have commissioned Y Bont to do this work. The project has begun since April 2018 with an annual total of **£121,000**. This funding covers the salaries and running costs of the project. 11 members of staff have been employed by Y Bont to do this work. The team is made up of three social workers, six counsellors, 1 Family meeting coordinator, 1 arbitrator. Referrals for this Service are made by social workers. The table below provides the number of families for whom Y Bont have provided interventions from 2021-2023.

<u>Years</u>	<u>Number of families</u>
2021-2022	63
2022-2023	71
April 2023-December 2023	51

5. What are the monitoring arrangements?

- 5.1 The two commissioned projects, namely the Family Support Team for the Meirionnydd Area of Gwynedd - Families First, and the Family Support Service; Therapeutic, Counselling and Mediation Services are monitored by the Welsh Government.
- 5.2 A quarterly report is sent to the Commissioning and Quality Officer within the Children and Supporting Families Service by Y Bont and Barnardo's with a performance report for each quarter, expenditure breakdown, invoices and case studies. This is in accordance with their contracts and the Families First Programme and entire SCW timetable. A report is also sent to the Assistant Head of Supporting People.
- 5.3 The data is presented in the Welsh Government's Performance Management spreadsheet and National Indicators, in order to respond to the Welsh Government's requirements.
- 5.4 We will submit the work to the Welsh Government and meetings will be held if required in order to challenge or discuss any comment, otherwise there will be an end-of-year meeting to ensure the project meets the requirements.
- 5.5 The Welsh Government announces an estimation of the grant funding at the end of December annually, we therefore plan the expenditure annually based on the grant funding we will receive but we cannot confirm the total until March, which is one other reason why there is an extension clause on the contracts.
- 5.6 The Welsh Government can change anything in their Action Plan or introduce an additional grant, therefore the projects are flexible to change with the ability to receive more funding to undertake additional work or schemes, depending on discussions.

5.7 We will need to recommission the work of the Family Support Team for Meirionnydd – Families First and the Family Support Service; Therapeutic, Counselling and Mediation Services by March 2025. Work in advance of the recommissioning will be undertaken by the Department during this year.

6. Is the Council getting value for money?

6.1 A meeting took place with the Welsh Government during the week commencing 11 December where it was noted they were happy with the commissioning work that was happening in Gwynedd for the Family Support Team for Meirionnydd – Families First and the Family Support Service; Therapeutic, Counselling and Mediation Services.

6.2 No underspend has been presented historically by Y Bont. For the year 22/23, Barnardo's had stated that they had an underspend of £10,000 because of a change in the staffing structure, and there was also a vacant post which contributed to the underspend.

6.3 No additional funding has been provided to the organisations for their work despite the number of referrals increasing annually, and that they are working with more individuals who need support from the Service. The number of referrals has increased significantly over the years.