

NAME OF COMMITTEE	Scrutiny Committee Gwynedd Council
DATE OF MEETING	29th January 2020
TITLE OF ITEM	Development of the Problematic and Harmful Sexual Behaviour Team (P/HSB Team)
PURPOSE	To inform the Committee on the development and key expectations of the new P/HSB Team.
AUTHOR	Stephen Wood and Sharron Carter Williams
CABINET MEMBER	Cllr Dilwyn Morgan

1. Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Scrutiny Committee on the development of the Problematic and Harmful Sexual Harmful Behaviour Team (P/HSB) for Gwynedd, outlining the rationale for the team and what we expect to achieve.

1.2 The Legal Framework in Wales around managing HSB is set out in Social Services and Wellbeing Act 2014 part 7 and the All Wales Child Protection Procedures. In addition the All Wales Protocol “The Management of Children/Young People who display Harmful Sexual Behaviour” provides additional guidance to practitioners.

2. Context

2.1 The purpose of the P/HSB team development project is to create a multi-agency integrated team that will provide support and help coordinate cases of problematic and harmful sexual behaviour.

2.2 The following are the official definitions for the behaviours we intend to focus on and develop interventions for;

‘Sexual behaviours expressed by children and young people under the age of 18 years old that are developmentally inappropriate, may be harmful towards self and others, or be abusive towards another child, young person or adult’ – (Hackett. S 2013)

Appropriate sexual behaviours –

- displayed between children or Young people of similar age or developmental ability
- reflective of natural curiosity, experimentation, consensual activities and positive choices

Problematic sexual behaviours –

- unusual for that particular child or young person
- of potential concern due to age, or developmental differences

- of potential concern due to activity type, frequency, duration or context in which they occur

Harmful sexual behaviour –

- excessive, secretive, compulsive, coercive, degrading or threatening
- involving significant age, developmental, or power differences of concern due to the activity type, frequency, duration or the context in which they occur.

2.3 For many years Gwynedd Children’s Services along with YJS have worked to develop a workforce and practice strategy that has enabled them to expand its ability to identify, assess and provide early intervention to children, young people and families where problematic/harmful sexual behaviour is a concern.

2.4 Much of our work in previous years concentrated on training staff in very high level GAP AIM assessment and intervention, and although beneficial we have struggled to identify and tackle issues early.

2.5 During the National Sexual Offending Thematic Inspection of Youth Justice in 2012, inspectors reported;

- *“Too many missed opportunities to intervene early in cases”.*
- *“Minimisation of behaviours in young children – some professional’s reluctance to tackle issues”.*
- *“Poor staff training and awareness at all levels of Social Care, Education and Health”*

2.6 In 2017-18 the North Wales Safeguarding Children’s Board (led by North Wales YJSs) engaged with NSPCC to become one of the early adopters of their **‘Harmful Sexual Behaviour Framework and Audit’**, which seeks;

“to provide a more coherent and evidence-informed approach for work with these children and young people, and to better understand how to improve outcomes for these vulnerable young people”.

Key Findings from the Audit on interventions were;

- *“Little early intervention available, relating to the paucity of agencies doing preventative work and lack of ability to recognize HSB”*
- *“Provision available is not well-known or well-advertised: Agencies who can do targeted work do not reach out to agencies who need to know; agencies have not been proactive in seeking out information (possibly related to issue of recognition)”*
- *“Provision is on a case by case basis and dependent on capacity - no automatic provision of service”*

2.7 It was evident from all of the reviews, audits and national information gathering evidence that although we had made great efforts to ensure our high risk and complex case management had good assessment and intervention provision, we (like many other councils in Wales and England) had missed the opportunity to develop prevention and early intervention interventions.

2.8 In addition there were deficits in our ability to coordinate service and support across departments and sectors.

3. The Integrated Care Fund

3.1 The Integrated Care Fund is Welsh Government funding which aims to drive and enable integrated and collaborative working between social services, health, housing, the third and independent sectors.

3.2 It is intended to help regional partnership boards develop and test new approaches and service delivery models that will support the underpinning principles of integration and prevention.

3.3 Evaluation and learning lie at the core of the ICF and it is essential that any ICF programmes or projects are designed with this in mind.

3.4 Specifically, ICF guidance states;

- The ICF should be utilised to work with families to help them stay together safely and prevent the need for children to become looked after.
- Regional partnership boards will be required to work within a shared strategic context which comprises of and works to achieve local authorities' children's services priorities.
- Creative and integrated approaches to implementing and delivering services which support families going through difficult times to help them stay together and which safely avert the need for care are to be prioritised.
- Priority should be given to developing regional approaches to supporting families, with Local Authorities, Health boards and the Social Value Sector all playing key roles.

3.5 It is difficult to explain fully the impact that incidents of harmful sexual behaviour have on individuals, families and communities. Family separation, care episodes, residential placements and community exclusion are often the result of un-met need, missed opportunities, or no automatic provision of service.

4. The Problematic and Harmful Sexual Behaviour Team (Tim Emrallt)

4.1 The Gwynedd team comprises of;

- **Specialist HSB consultant**, whose role it is to support and co-work high level and complex assessment and interventions with social workers and youth justice staff, ensuring quality and well-informed reports are available for court, child protection and care proceedings. They also provide an operational overview of demand and risk management for senior management groups.
- **Social Worker**, working with children's services staff to develop awareness, knowledge and skills across a spectrum of need. Providing support and training opportunities for early intervention and prevention support and resources.

- **Education Worker**, providing support, training and awareness raising for education professional, ensuring there is a consistent approach to P/HSB reports. Working in schools and specialist education provision facilitating the development of interventions and tools to assist in the effective identification of issues and problems at an early stage.
- **Health Worker**, working with health staff to ensure there is a consistent and high quality approach to identification and assessment of P/HSB incidents which is compatible with education and Social care. Developing structures and networks within health services that ensure issues are dealt with early and enable cases to be transitioned to more intensive interventions when needed.

Overall we want to see a more informed and capable workforce across the services and sectors, we need to have a consistent and high quality focus on intervening early and preventing escalation to more harmful behaviours.

4.2 The team is supported by ICF team for monitoring and reporting, and the Children's Services Senior Management Team (SMT) for strategic planning and direction.

4.3 The Team is based with the Youth Justice Service in Felinheli, where it benefits from the partnership structures and well established cross sector networks.

4.4 The senior management team have also embarked on the development of a P/HSB Strategy for Gwynedd as part of the project, this is based on a GAP Analysis and Data Study completed by an external specialist whose findings will be presented to the SMT in March 2020.

4.5 The SMT are also keen to have the project and it's work to be formally evaluated, work is ongoing with the University of Wales Bangor to establish an academic review for 2020-21.

5. Achievements so far

5.1 All staff have now been in place since September 2019, with action Plans developed for all three areas of practice development; Social Care, Education and Health.

5.2 Staff have received most of the training identified as part of individual plans and based on their specialist area of work, and work is progressing well in the development of networks and contacts across our partnerships.

5.3 Staff have had the opportunity to visit other public and third sector providers working across Wales and England to observe and learn about best practice.

5.4 Staff have initiated work on creating innovative and needs based interventions, focussing on early identification and prevention work. Work has begun to test these interventions and consultation work continues with partners.

5.5 The team have developed staff training packages which outline their roles and the expected outcomes of the project, creating clarity of purpose and the necessity for joined-up working.

5.6 The GAP Analysis and Data Study are now complete, the needs analysis evaluated the capability of the workforce and the interventions used, whilst the data analysis reviewed referral demand, levels and case studies. From the findings and following scrutiny by the SMT a P/HSB Strategy will be created for 2020-22 and will set the standards of practice in both front-line delivery and partnership collaboration.

5.7 The HSB Consultant and Social work continue to provide specialist support for social workers and youth justice staff, recent high-level cases have benefited greatly in the preparation of assessments and reports for court.

6. Summary

6.1 Gwynedd Council have been bold and innovative in the creation of **Tim Emrallt**, research has identified that with the correct assessment and intervention between 87% and 93% of children and young people do not continue to demonstrate PSB/HSB, giving potential positive quality life for the child/young person and their families and importantly reducing the numbers of victims of sexual harm.

6.2 We are trying to reduce the number of HSB cases being referred into statutory services following an incident of abuse. We will do this by trying to ensure that we have within Gwynedd a range of professionals across many sectors both in statutory and early intervention services that are suitably skilled with knowledge and an understanding of what PSB and HSB looks like; in order to provide timely and appropriate interventions, so as to prevent abuse from taking place and minimise its effect.

6.3 We are also trying to upskill and improve support by means of assessment and intervention for those cases where an incident has already taken place; both victim and perpetrator in order to support children and young people and ensure that they receive the most appropriate support they require.

6.4 Our External Specialist Consultant (who has 30 years experience in this field of work) recently commented;

“The establishment of the Gwynedd multi-agency HSB team as a focal point to coordinate innovative services and translate theoretical best practice into action is a wonderful opportunity to lead the way forward within Wales”.