

REPORT TO THE COUNCIL'S CABINET

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Date of meeting: | 29 March 2022 |
| Cabinet Member: | Councillor Dilwyn Morgan |
| Contact Officer: | Marian Parry Hughes, Head of Children and Supporting Families Service |
| Contact E-mail: | marianhughes@gwynedd.llyw.cymru |
| Title of Item: | No Wrong Door Strategy |

1 THE DECISION SOUGHT

- 1.1 The Cabinet is asked to accept the 'No Wrong Door' strategy as the strategic direction for future developments in the children and young people field, as well as supporting its implementation locally in Gwynedd as part of a wider regional plan.
- 1.2 It is in accordance with the principles of Ffordd Gwynedd and lies within our arrangements for developing the way the service strengthens front door arrangements, access to services, and the approach of offering early and preventative interventions to avoid problems from getting worse. It will strengthen our ability to extend our services to be more integrated with our partners.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Members will already be aware of the Children's Commissioner for Wales' June 2020 report which highlighted the need to transform the way services work together to support children and young people who need support, regardless of the level of need, where they experience emotional distress and/or behavioural problems. The report emphasised that processes and systems were far too complex, and as such, there was evidence of children and young people falling between the crevices, waiting on waiting lists for long periods and then being told that they were on the wrong list or knocking on the wrong door. This regional strategy offers a solution to improve services for those children and young people by ensuring that services create teams around the family to meet their needs rather than expecting families to fit in with what is available. It is a pleasure to present a summary of this new strategy to the Cabinet today.
- 2.2 In order to make improvements within this field, it is essential to do so in conjunction with our key partners, such as the Health Board and the education sector. The strategy identifies opportunities for future service development by learning from models of good practice from Wales and beyond.
- 2.3 The strategy was developed following a review of the current situation in north Wales by an external company commissioned by the six authorities' Heads of Children's Services and health leaders over a five-month period in the summer of 2021. The work was completed using an Appreciative Inquiry methodology that focuses on strengths and looks to find out what works well in the current system, as well as working to develop a joint vision for the future, drawing up a model of practice for the future and developing an action plan.

- 2.4 This was done through a variety of different methods including working with operational managers across the region; researching good practice in Wales and beyond; holding a series of multi-agency workshops across the region, holding participation sessions with children and young people who had contact with one or more agencies, and then developing the strategy through lifestyle by using feedback on the content from senior managers. It was not possible to include representatives from schools in the workshops due to work pressures on the education departments during the period. However, as they are a core partner to the success of the work, we have held discussions locally with our colleagues in the education department to ensure that they are a key part of the development for the future locally.
- 2.5 The final strategy proposes a radical review and change of the current arrangements and offers an ambitious model for collaboration, with the aim of improving the mental health and well-being outcomes of children and young people up to 25 years old. It builds on the strengths of the current system and is tailored to meet local needs.
- 2.6 As the strategy recognises that children and young people's mental health and well-being needs to be supported within a complex framework of numerous services and interventions, the strategy has implications for all agencies and partners that contribute towards the health and well-being outcomes of children and young people to support them to live their best lives. All agencies will need to analyse their systems, strategies and policies to complement this strategy.
- 2.7 The intention was to develop a strategy that facilitated local authorities, the Health Board and their partners to support the emotional and mental resilience of children and young people across the region. It was recognised that those who work in the region are hardworking and committed to providing a good service, but the workforce as a whole was struggling to cope with the significant increase in demand for the service. As pressure builds on the system and resources diminish, tensions emerge. The staff who participated in the review wanted leaders in the field to commit to a radical strategy that offers opportunities to develop effective services that deliver better outcomes for children and young people in accordance with national visions and policy objectives.
- 2.8 In essence, the plan does not offer a short term or easy solution to complex problems that have existed for an extended period of time. However, it does offer a plan for change in an attempt to respond to the vision that already exists within the services, which is difficult to realise due to numerous obstacles.
- 2.9 It is clear that partners will need a significant culture change to offer services that are far more integrated than they are currently. This will need to be achieved through easy processes and systems, clear structures and governance procedures and most importantly, the desire and intention to put the child or young person at the heart of everything we do.

3 THE RATIONALE AND JUSTIFICATION FOR RECOMMENDING THE DECISION

- 3.1 The strategy underlines the importance of managing the demand for services through increased use of early intervention and preventative services. The strategy states that investment in these services cannot be at the expense of reducing capacity elsewhere in the system. Demand is increasing across the whole system and the strategy states that investment will need to be planned by finding an appropriate balance that responds to the current pressure and manages future demand.
- 3.2 The case for change was driven by three main factors; firstly, feedback from children, young people and families who stated that there were numerous obstacles to accessing services with long waiting lists. They noted that their experiences of the services and their outcomes were poor and that this in turn had a negative impact on life opportunities in the short term, as well as throughout their lives in the long term. Secondly, feedback from professionals who identified staff recruitment and retention problems due to increasing demand on the service; long waiting lists and the need to overcome many barriers before providing the service to families. Lastly, the existence of a strong economic business case for change because investing early to support the mental health and well-being of children and young people is not only going to improve their lives, it will also be more cost effective for the public purse in the short term and throughout the lives of individuals.

4 THE PLAN

- 4.1 A vision statement has been developed for the strategy, which was developed from the main themes highlighted during the workshops with professionals, as well as through the consultation with children and young people. That vision is: *'We want children and young people in north Wales to have the best mental health and well-being. We do this by ensuring that access to the agencies that support them is easy, and that the agencies work together effectively and aim to achieve outcomes in a timely manner based on the choice of children, young people and their families'*.
- 4.2 A set of principles developed through regional collaboration was agreed. They can be seen in their entirety in the strategy itself, but they include statements such as: *'Children and young people will be valued for who they are'; 'We will listen to children, young people and their families to understand their world and their experiences. Their views will help us shape and evaluate our services'; 'There will be better support for mental health in schools' and 'We will make it easy for children, young people and their families to find information about mental health and, if necessary, to find support that is accessible and uses simple and convenient arrangements'*.
- 4.3 The service model that has been developed to implement the 'No Wrong Door' strategy is designed to be flexible and responsive to different levels of need, with

each level providing help and support which would be commensurate to the need, and with the focus being on offering early intervention to try to prevent problems from getting worse. This model is going to replace models based on diagnosis and hierarchy in terms of access criteria.

- 4.4 The aim is to get the right support for the child/young person as soon as possible. Good practice shows that this can be achieved through a process characterised by good collaboration, sharing information and mature partnerships. The strategy offers multidisciplinary services that will operate as if it were one agency. This means a significant change in culture and a desire to make things work, as well as new funding arrangements, systems and processes including flexibility between the children and adults services across all partners.
- 4.5 The model will need to respond quickly to the mental health and well-being problems of children and young people in the community in order to find early solutions without having to access more formal services. This means that general services and schools play a key role in identifying needs early on, as well as developing good practice to support the victims, including knowing how to administer first aid for mental health and well-being problems. Therefore, training is key for these agencies to reduce the demand on statutory and formal services.
- 4.6 The strategy refers to operating using a team around the family model and in hubs that will act as one front door for timely access to the right service. This will be through enquiries, signposting to other services or information; assessing needs, supporting families and providing an emergency response to any situation at any point in the intervention. The hubs will ideally include workers from different agencies and disciplines and will operate within agreed governance frameworks.
- 4.7 Strategic accountability will exist through the North Wales Regional Partnership Board for setting the policy context and holding the operational levels to account for their performance and use of resources.

5 NEXT STEPS

- 5.1 As a service, we are confident that we have the appropriate structure and foundation to develop the service to meet expectations. We are already operating one front door that combines statutory services, early intervention and supporting families by using a team around the family model. We have established the 'Gwynedd Family Hub' to do this as part of the service for many years now, with clear accountability and governance arrangements. We are using a team around the family model across the service along with recognised practice and risk assessment models. Therefore, we believe that we are starting from an advantageous position.
- 5.2 Further work is needed to develop more integrated services that will involve our partners in our arrangements. This means that resources from places like the Health Board will need to be moved to the hub locally to strengthen our ability to provide early intervention for children and young people.

- 5.3 Further collaboration is needed with the Education Department and schools in particular to develop expertise and confidence in the schools to support children and young people through difficult times. That discussion is already underway with our colleagues in the education field.
- 5.4 We are realistic in that this will not happen overnight. An ambitious approach is needed to reach and realise local solutions within the context of strong regional principles to meet the local need. The strategy itself contributes a 5-year action plan. All partners will need to demonstrate corporate commitment and resource commitment; strong programme management and external specialist support from time to time to support the transformation process.
- 5.5 Developing the plan will not be cost-neutral and currently, it is difficult to predict what the financial implications will be in terms of meeting expectations and realising the plan. It will certainly be possible to look at using a portion of the transformation funding and the RIF (formerly ICF) to set a direction and allow further development.

6 EQUALITY

- 6.1 The Equality Act 2010 places clear duties on public sector organisations to prevent discrimination and promote equality for people with specific Protected Characteristics. These are - age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity. Specific duties involve providing reasonable adaptations for people to help them to access the services they need.

7. VIEWS OF THE STATUTORY OFFICERS

The Monitoring Officer

No observations too add in relation to propriety

Statutory Finance Officer

The development of this Strategy is clearly the result of thorough work to identify demand on our service, from some of Gwynedd's most vulnerable residents. In addition, I am convinced that the adoption of the Strategy would be a major step forward in the context of embedding the principles of the Well-being of Future Generations Act into the services provided, and I welcome that.

However, paragraph 5.5 states that the development of the scheme will not be cost neutral, and that it is difficult to predict at this stage what the financial resource implications will be for meeting and expectations and to realise the plan. Should the Cabinet adopt the 'No Wrong Door' strategy as the strategic direction in line with the decision sought, that decision would be subject to funding the function within existing resources until grant funding has been confirmed, or a request for new resources has been submitted and

approved in accordance with normal procedure. The adoption of any strategy should not create a new spending commitment until the additional costs have been identified and funded.

I note from the draft strategy that the development of a financial plan will take place during 2022. It is key, to ensure that the scheme is established on a firm footing as well as ensuring appropriate financial administration, that any additional costs on Gwynedd Council, together with the sources of funding, are identified as soon as possible.