



## Review of Halton Children's Trust Arrangements – 3.12.2020

### Notes/Actions

#### Attendees:

Cllr Tom McInerney (HBC), Dot Roberts (HBC CYP Policy), Mal Hampson (HSO), John Hunt (Bright Sparks), Clare Collins (HSCF), Angela Woolfall (Foster Carers), Mil Vasic (HBC People), Ann McIntyre (HBC Education/SEND), Tracey Coffey (HBC Children & Family), Lee Bloomfield (NWBH), Helen Whittick (NWBH-CAMHS), Pauline Jones (HHT), David Baugh (Pewithall/HAPH), Mary Murphy (Riverside College), Steph Birchall (HBC CICC), Charlotte and Tyler (CICC), Zarah Ross (Youth Focus NW), Elliot and Leah (HYC), Tracy Ryan (HBC CYP Policy) and Kelly Collier (HBC CYP Policy).

#### Apologies:

Gareth Jones (HBC Youth Justice), Danielle Scott (Sts P&P/HASH), SI Laura Marler (Cheshire Police), PC Jane Tetlow (Cheshire Police), Andy Shakeshaft (Bridgewater), Jessica Burton (Cheshire Fire & Rescue), Hayley Dooley (DWP Jobcentre Plus), Shélah Semoff (HBC), David Parr (HBC), Lynne Hall (HSCF), Denise Roberts (Halton CCG), Eileen O'Meara (HBC Public Health), Cllr Dave Cargill (HBC), Jane Kinsella (Bridgewater/Children's Specialist Services) and Cleo Alonso.

#### 1.0 Trust Arrangements Recap

The Policy Team provided a short recap/overview of the arrangements that members agreed at the end of last year. That the draft Terms of Reference for the new Trust Executive Group and the Participation/Consultation Group had been produced for agreement by both groups at the meetings scheduled for February/March 2020.

Unfortunately, members may recall that our plans to implement the new Trust structure were temporarily put on-hold initially due to the ILACS Ofsted Inspection and then COVID-19.

The impact of the COVID pandemic on everyone's lives (work, family and social life) has been profound. Now was an opportune time for members to reflect on the past eight months, share experiences/updates on this and then consider how this learning will influence the Trust arrangements to be introduced in 2021.

#### COVID-19 experiences, updates and impact

##### Bright Sparks

- Consultation work and keeping in touch with young people at Bright Sparks has been challenging when not able to meet up in person.
- Contact maintained by Zoom and the occasional social distancing meetings when not in lockdown.
- Work with young people usually undertaken in schools has not been possible due to COVID.
- Participation in consultation work and/or review meetings etc using Skype has been extremely difficult and impractical due to the lack of support required in overcoming technical communication challenges for young people with SEND that already have communication difficulties.

### **Halton Speak Out**

- HSO have branched out into two new areas of project work recently during the pandemic.
- The Proceeds of Crime Team with Iridium Education are helping to set up an arts/music project for young people.
- As part of the new youth services being developed, the Council has funded the Make Your Place, The Place project covering Brookvale and Sutton Park. The Police, Kops in Kids are supporting this inclusive community project with young people from Bright Sparks, Sandymoor and Ormiston Bolingbroke Academy. The young people will learn how to conduct audits of what's available locally for them, review the impact of COVID on their lives and identify what they want for the future. The work undertaken by the young people will lead onto an accreditation with British Youth Council. See leaflet attached.

### **Halton SEND Carers Forum**

- Parents and carers have found dealing with the impact of COVID very challenging as all contact is usually face-to-face and many parents struggle with IT so home schooling and keeping in touch has been difficult.

### **Halton Foster Carers**

- Similar to the other groups, keeping in touch, maintaining contact and the lack of being to connect with each other face-to-face has been very difficult to deal with.
- To support each other they set up a WhatsApp chat group, used social media and used the time to access online training as much as possible.
- Usual foster carers' recruitment was replaced by recruiting carers via Radio sessions.
- Others challenges have been schooling, IT has been a big challenge in supporting children and young people placed in their care placement.
- Tracey Coffey acknowledged that our foster carers have done a brilliant job in continuing to support children – they have been outstanding.
- David Baugh wished to note that all local schools have recognised the proactive work and support the foster carers have maintained for children throughout the pandemic and added that the work done by them has been phenomenal.

### **HBC - Education and SEND**

- As of 3 December 2020, we currently have 415 child and young people self-isolating.
- HBC Health and Safety Team have produced new guidance and risk assessments for schools and supported 57 schools in undertaking COVID risk assessments.
- Schools have worked throughout the pandemic to support education for key workers and vulnerable children.
- Schools have maintained to keep local children safe and are doing a fantastic job.
- The regular SEND assurance meetings with Ofsted has taken place virtually with good progress being made on work underway.
- David Baugh added that all primary school Headteachers would like it on record that the support provided by the Council during the pandemic has been fantastic and they would all like to thank Ann McIntyre, Mil Vasic and Jill Farrell for their support. David mentioned thanks to Lynn/Paul (Health & Safety) for all their support and guidance.

### **HBC – Children & Family (Children's Social Care -CSC)**

- CSC Self Evaluation Framework (SEF) currently being completing.
- 1700 individual risk assessments were conducted at the beginning of COVID.
- Contact by the service was maintained either daily, weekly or on a regular basis with families, children and young people.

- The pandemic has presented opportunities to progress more creative ways of working e.g. online learning, using social media to engage with Dad's not previously had involvement with.
- Initially at start of pandemic rate of referrals rose, then cases calmed down and now seeing a slight increase due to Domestic Abuse.
- The emotional health and well-being impact of COVID has been the most significant on children and young people at level 2 (Halton Level of Need).
- For children and young people at the higher level 3, this has led to an increase in family strain with an increase in the number of Child Protection cases.
- Children in Care Teams have managed to maintain contact, the use of virtual contact with children and young people has been well liked, they felt they had more contact and able to get in touch more easily with social workers.
- The pandemic has allowed new and different ways of working and worked with Ann's department (Education/SEND) to ensure the work continued.
- Face-to-face visits for vulnerable children using PPE, even when there was still a risk of COVID continued. Otherwise, virtual contacts has been used – consistent feedback from families, children and young people is that they really like this way of keeping in touch.
- Things to consider for the future will be how the service manage the demand to meet the longer term impact of COVID on families.

### **North West Boroughs NHS Foundation Trust**

- What has been really notable across the organisation is the response of staff in responding to the pandemic.
- Senior leaders agreed that the service NHS staff have provided in the circumstances has been unbelievable.
- Gold, Silver and Bronze level of meetings were put in place to prioritise and manage cases – meetings were held daily to allow cases to be stepped up and down as the pandemic progressed.
- Compared to other North West local authorities and partner agencies, NWBH noted that Halton has managed services very well across the Borough during the pandemic.
- Virtual contact in supporting patients has depended on individual circumstances, it has worked well for some people and not for others. A lot of learning is being taken forward and NWBH intend to continue using this approach in the future.
- At the start of the pandemic, NWBH implemented business continuity plans to manage/deliver services. Eight months on, these plans are now at the restoration and recovery phase.
- The ability to mobilise services at a fast pace and cut through 'red tape' was brilliant. For example, a crisis line for adults and children was introduced in 9 days, which would previously have taken 9 months.
- It is hoped that services can be introduced/delivered much quicker in future.
- It has been really tough, the team have been fantastic in maintaining the service.
- Halton CAMHS services will continue to develop and go from strength to strength.
- There has been a recognition that all partners have had to adapt and have worked together really well in these difficult circumstances.

### **Halton Housing Trust**

- It has been extremely busy and tough time during the pandemic.
- The Council and HHT have worked together very well to support families, especially in responding to rough sleepers and homelessness.
- Really very proud of the people we work with in the Borough and for supporting people to stay safe.

- Tom wished to record thanks to HHT for the work in organising and delivering the food hampers to local families.

### **HAPH - Primary schools rep**

- Dealing with the pandemic has been very tough for schools/staff, schools remained open from the first lockdown in March 2020 to enable 84 key workers' children and vulnerable children to attend school.
- School staff have learnt about anti-bacterial cleaning and sanitising procedures across all areas within the school. This was needed to keep all staff and pupils safe in meeting the COVID-19 safety requirements/guidelines.
- Staff came into schools from 7.30am to clean, then cleaning sessions around every 2 hours was required throughout the school day. To accommodate these new routines, the number of lessons able to be delivered per day was very restricted.
- Prior to the children returning to school in September, school staff were able to maintain contact with all 214 pupils for a number of different reasons. For example, providing the free school meals deliveries to children in their own homes was an important way to keep in contact and ensure pupils remained safe.
- Pewithall have 214 pupils on roll, all of these children were risk assessed - red, amber, green in terms of those at more risk/vulnerable.
- From September, schools have welcomed back pupils who have been keen to return and see their friends and other people. Initially on their return, the impact of the pandemic on children being out of the school environment for so long was very apparent.
- On their return in September, the children's behaviour was very different. Children were very aggressive and challenging with teachers being physically attacked. They often absconded or escaped from school so teachers/staff frequently had to cajole children to return to school.
- Across the Borough, teachers have expressed how they have never experienced anything like it and this dramatic change in behaviour.
- 10 weeks on since their return back at school, children's behaviour has massively improved. The number of classes per day has increased due to cleaning/sanitising routines being required less frequently and everyone more familiar with the new routines and 'bubbles' etc.
- The impact of the pandemic on teachers, staff and Head teachers has been overwhelming at times and will wish to leave or retire early once the pandemic is over.
- Pupils across the Borough have welcomed being able to go back to schools as they can now regularly see their friends and other people.

### **Riverside College**

- 6,000 students 16+ and 500 college staff back at the college.
- College have conducted internal COVID 'track and trace' and of the 6,500 pupils and college staff have had 160 cases to date. Staff cases were mostly support staff and not college tutors, which has enabled the courses to continue.
- Some of the challenges involved resolving issues for students related to the Calculated Grades (known as CAGS).
- Face to face enrolments were undertaken to ensure students were supported to make the right choices and enrolled onto the appropriate course - this took 10 days to complete.

### **HBC Lead Member**

- Tom acknowledged the inspiration, contribution and the hard work that everyone across the Borough has made during the pandemic.
- The work by everyone has been tremendous and wished to thank all partners/staff.

## **Halton Youth Cabinet Ellis and Leah**

- Zoom and Microsoft Teams has been used for virtual meetings and when possible social distancing meeting held in person.
- Progress made on a number of projects across Halton, the Liverpool City Region and National, for example:
  - Producing an information pack for new HYC members;
  - Make our Rights a Reality;
  - Make Your Mark;
  - MYP Elections;
  - Support work for the commissioning of the new Halton Youth Services;
  - Workshops and events to engage young people and recruit them into the HYC.

Ellis raised a couple of questions from HYC members:

- The vaccine roll out for young people within the Borough. Lee and Helen (NWBH) noted that the Government would be issuing national guidance on this and that partner agencies would follow the requirements in terms of priority groups etc for the vaccination programme.
- Access to mental health support/services for young people – Helen advised that Halton CAMHS have no young people on any waiting lists currently. That all referrals were allocated and support needs were being met, if HYC had any concerns she would be happy to meet outside of the meeting.
- Future agenda item request for transport links and affordability - this was agreed.

## **Children in Care Council and Young People**

- Over the past eight months, young people have focussed on their school work.
- The group have not met physically so contact has been maintained on a 2-weekly basis by phone and FaceTime video calls
- Young people would like to continue using these ways in the future.
- Contacts with social workers continued by phone and video phone calls
- A CICC survey had been undertaken during the pandemic, the group have a few new members and are getting ready with plans for their Christmas party.

## **Agreement of the Trust arrangements from 2021**

All members agreed that the Trust structure previously agreed was still appropriate to introduce.

The experiences/updates shared by the groups have highlighted the need to consider the different needs of each group to enable inclusive engagement to be effective. For the Trust to fully involve and engage with our groups, we need to be mindful about meeting these communication needs. Style/approach of meetings and producing child-friendly or easy-read inclusive documents, reports and information, which will need to be factored into our future Trust arrangements.

The shared updates has also evidenced that as Trust partners, we have strengthened our support of each other during the pandemic and have continued to work together very well. The creativity in doing things differently and the lessons learnt throughout the pandemic will be used to improve the way services are delivered going forward.

The Policy Team will begin preparation work with groups and members on the Children, Young People and Families Plan which is due for renewal from next year. This work tie in with the new Trust structure/arrangements as they are introduced in 2021.

SEND work with parents/carers and young people that has been progressed by the Policy Team during the pandemic has identified an idea to be explored further to support inclusive

engagement for the Trust arrangements. In working with Adults Social Care, Halton Speak Out supported young people with learning difficulties in a large group project, known as Positive Outcomes for People (POP). POP meetings included professionals, parents/carers and young people that met as one group at the start/end of the meeting. Members split into their own peer groups to enable focused discussions at the pace/style that met each groups' needs. Each peer group was supported by a facilitator (if needed) to feedback to the large group. This breaks down barriers in communication whilst enabling participation and consultation.

### **Question Time-style events**

- Current Trust membership will be invited to attend these during the year for age specific groups 1) Primary school age 2) Secondary school age and 3) Post 16/Riverside College.
- Members will be kept informed by email of partnership matters and minutes of the meetings circulated for information.

### **Trust Executive Group**

- The first meeting to be set up for end of January/early February 2021
- Membership will comprise of senior leaders and group reps.

### **Participation/Consultation Group**

- Membership will comprise of reps for parents/carers, young people and youth support workers will be supported by the Policy Team.
- Prior to agreeing the final details/meeting dates for this group, the Policy Team will explore the POP group idea further and work closely with each group individually to develop and agree these arrangements.

Tom thanks members for attending and wished everyone a happy Christmas and New Year.