



Executive Director/Director Non-Key Executive Decision Report

Author/Lead Officer of Report: Helen Sweaton

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Report to: *John Macilwraith, Executive Director of People Services*

Date of Decision: *30 July 2020*

Subject: *Family Group Conferencing Bid*

Which Cabinet Member Portfolio does this relate to? *Children and Families*

Which Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee does this relate to? *Children, Young People and Family Support*

Has an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) been undertaken? Yes No

If YES, what EIA reference number has it been given? *(208)*

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

If YES, give details as to whether the exemption applies to the full report / part of the report and/or appendices and complete below:-

"The (report/appendix) is not for publication because it contains exempt information under Paragraph (insert relevant paragraph number) of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended)."

Purpose of Report:

The purpose of this report is to outline the grant that has been received by Sheffield City Council from the Department of Education and detail how the funding will be used to provide Family Group Conferences.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the Executive Director of People Services:

- 1) Approves the proposals to spend the grant awarded to the Council as outlined in this report.
- 2) Notes that the Council has already received the grant funding of £245,500 from the Department for Education.
- 3) Please be aware that this relates to the memorandum of understanding with Daybreak and Coram which details the party's intention that they will work together as part of the Supporting Families: Investing In Practice programme and each party's responsibility which the Executive Director of People Services signed in February 2020.

Background Papers:

(Insert details of any background papers used in the compilation of the report.)

Lead Officer to complete:-	
1	I have consulted the relevant departments in respect of any relevant implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist, and comments have been incorporated / additional forms completed / EIA completed, where required.
	Finance: <i>Sonya Oates</i>
	Legal: <i>Gemma Day</i>
	Equalities: <i>Bashir Khan</i>
<i>Legal, financial/commercial and equalities implications must be included within the report and the name of the officer consulted must be included above.</i>	
2	Lead Officer Name: <i>Helen Sweaton</i>
	Job Title: <i>Assistant Director Provider Services</i>
Date: 16 July 2020	

1. PROPOSAL

- 1.1 Children and Families Service took the opportunity in August 2019 to apply to the Department for Education's 'Supporting Families: Investing in Practice' invitation to bid for funding to extend the Council's Edge of Care offer which includes Family Group Conferencing ("FGC"). The service was awarded a grant of £245,500. The Council must also make a contribution towards the cost of the implementation of the model of £42,000. The service is seeking approval to spend the grant allowing the Edge of Care service to extend the FGC offer in Sheffield.
- 1.2 In Sheffield we put children at the centre of our practice and work with families and their networks to explore their strengths and build on them. FGC is one of the tools we use to do this by putting families at the centre of decision making, helping them to build their capacity and empower them to safeguard their own children by utilising their support networks to move towards independence.
- 1.3 FGC provides a robust avenue for collaborative engagement and true partnership between children, families and professionals. Helping all families to see themselves as part of the solution and promote the possibility of change through the value based approach of FGC.
- 1.4 FGC already forms part of our current practice and we are committed to continue developing it. The service would like to improve the agility and response rate to embedding FGC across social care practice to enable earlier intervention with a variety of families to help them stay together.
- 1.5 This funding will support the service to continue the change journey; moving away from needs/incident based decision making approach, to strengths based practice that empowers families to acknowledge that they can succeed and stay safely together.
- 1.6 The essential criteria for a FGC in Sheffield:
1. There is a risk of family break-down which may result in a child/young person having to be placed in care.
 2. There needs to be clear outcomes for the family to work toward.
 3. Consent is gained from the family.
 4. There is a wider family network (this can include friends).
- 1.7 Families will be considered for FGC if they are open to children's social care because the child or young person has been exposed and/or is involved with domestic abuse, alcohol and/or drug misuse, parental mental health issues and/or when decisions need to be made about how to reduce offending behaviour. FGC are also considered when there is a need for permanency planning, when a child is at risk of being accommodated under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 or made

subject to care proceedings and to support the safe return of children and young people to their family. In addition, FGC can be used to develop child protection plans and to develop plans for a young person who is about to leave care.

1.8 The funding will be used to support the expansion of the existing Family Group Conferencing Team providing:

- Appointment of additional staff including FGC Co-ordinators and Advocates.
- Provide a contribution to the service running costs including administration, finance and management of staff.
- Contribute to additional service direct costs including mileage/travel, venues, refreshments, interpreters etc. and meeting costs.
- Regular (approximately every 6 weeks) practice development meetings for FGC team including, any sessional co-ordinators and advocates.

1.9 The Council will work in partnership with Daybreak, and Coram as part of the Supporting Families: Investing In Practice (SF:IIP) programme funded by the Department for Education and in collaboration with What Works for Children's Social Care (WWCSC), on the use of family group conferencing (FGC) at pre-proceedings stage, including an evaluation of this (the "Project"). The Council, Daybreak and Coram have been separately commissioned by the DfE with the intention that they work together to deliver this project.

2. HOW DOES THIS DECISION CONTRIBUTE?

2.1 We already have an FGC service in place and are committed to continuing to embed FGC across children's social care. With support from *Supporting Families: investing in practice* we will improve our FGC offer to fully embed the practice for families so we can intervene early to help families stay safe and well together.

2.2 We are committed to taking a strength based approach to our work with families through our adoption of the Signs of Safety practice model and a key objective of our work is to support children and families to stay together. We strongly believe that FGC is aligned with our principles and it will support us in local service planning to deliver our vision for children and families in Sheffield:

Children, young people and families are supported to achieve their full potential

2.3 Our supporting principles are:

- Children are at the centre of our practice;
- We intervene at the earliest opportunity;
- Our workforce is skilled and supported;
- Children and families benefit from high performing, high quality services.

3. HAS THERE BEEN ANY CONSULTATION?

3.1 There is no requirement for the council to consult on these proposals; it is an extension and enhancement of existing services.

4. RISK ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

4.1 Equality of Opportunity Implications

4.1.1 Decisions need to take into account the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty contained in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 which identifies the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it

The Equality Act 2010 identifies the following groups as a protected characteristic: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion and belief; sex and sexual orientation.

An EIA has been carried and highlights that for a few very vulnerable and troubled families; access to this type of intervention will prove critical in keeping the family together and reducing crisis. The actual impact can only be small quantifiably, as the cohort group is relatively small, but the qualitative impact for the families we reach is high. Where older children enter the care system, it can be difficult to find suitable placements, and the young person often struggles with the transition. Outcomes are generally more favourable for young people who can stay safely and happily in the family home. The funding to extend the Edge of Care Family Group Conferencing will support the service to continue the change journey to strengths based practice that empowers families to

acknowledge that they can succeed and stay safely together.

4.2 Financial and Commercial Implications

4.2.1 This Department of Education funding of £245,500 is from the Children’s Social Care Supporting Families: Investing in Practice (liP) Programme Grant.

The grant supports one area of the liP Programme: Family Group Conferencing. Funding is split as follows:

	DfE Funding	SCC Contribution	Total
FGC	£245,500	£42,000	£287,500

Funding was received in two payments: in December 2019 and February 2020. No further funding is expected after this. The programme is due to run until 31st March 2022.

The funding has been made available via a Section 31 grant determination and is to enable the service to build the team’s capacity to deliver the programme. There are no other terms and conditions within the grant determination and no mention of clawback.

The Project Manager will need to read, understand and comply with all of the grant terms and conditions as detailed in the offer letter and grant agreement and the Code of Conduct for Grant Recipients.

4.3 Legal Implications

4.3.1 The grant of £245,500 has been received by Sheffield City Council under Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003 from the Department for Education (DfE). This gives a Minister of the Crown the power to “pay a grant to a local authority in England towards expenditure incurred or to be incurred by it”.

4.3.2 The Council is able to accept the grant funding by virtue of Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011. This provides Local Authorities with a “general power of competence” and allows them to “do anything that individuals generally may do”.

4.3.3 Family group conferences can form part of the Public Law Outline (PLO), which is a case management tool for children’s care and supervision proceedings. The PLO sets out different duties local authorities have, details pre-proceedings work and the family court procedure rules.

4.3.4 In accordance with the Children Act, a local authority has a general duty to ‘safeguard and promote the welfare of children within their area who are in need’ and ‘so far as is consistent with that duty, to promote the upbringing of such children by their families’. By offering family group conferences, this goes towards supporting the Local Authority fulfilling

these duties.

- 4.3.5 The Council received a Funding Letter and a Grant Determination letter from the DfE confirming the funding and detailing the purpose of the grant and the payment arrangements. There appears to be no further terms and conditions provided by the DfE.
- 4.3.6 The Council has signed a memorandum of understanding with Daybreak and Coram. The three parties have been separately commissioned with the intention that all parties work together in accordance with this funded programme. The parties intend to work together until 31 March 2022 and each party has different responsibilities to fulfil for the project. Daybreak provide support to 'ensure effective delivery and implementation of the new models', the Council will deliver the family group conferences and Coram will collect the data and carry out the analysis.
- 4.3.7 All Parties must comply with the relevant data protection legislations and the Council will be the data controller.
- 4.3.8 The procurement of any goods, works or services by the Council must be undertaken in accordance with all relevant provisions of the Council's Constitution including its Contracts Standing Orders and all applicable Procurement rules (Public Contracts Regulations 2015).
- 4.3.9 Please note that the grant has already been received and the memorandum of understanding has already been signed. This report is to note the funding, the memorandum of understanding that has been signed and how the funding will be spent.

4.4 Other Implications

- 4.4.1 Staff will be appointed to roles within the expanded Family Group Conferencing Teams. The expansion of the FGC service will be fully evaluated in the context of the wider Edge of Care Service and at the end of the funding period a case will be made to continue on an invest to save basis.

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 No alternative models have been considered. This was a stream of funding available to specifically as part of the DfE's 'Supporting Families: Investing in Practice' initiative. Family Group Conferencing is a key innovation identified by them for scale and spread.

6. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 Supporting the recommendations in this report will allow the service to

utilise the grant as outlined in the report.

- 6.2 Extension of the FGC model will support the following outcomes: -
- We expect families to be more resilient and make use of their own support networks.
 - Families will move away from social care involvement and there will be associated cost avoidance for the council.