



New Strengthening Families Service

Warwickshire County Council's Children and Families Business Unit has a new service which incorporates Targeted Family Support and Child In Need and is called Strengthening Families.

The service is for families with children and young people aged 0-18 years old who need support to improve their life chances or avoid issues escalating to child protection concerns. Depending on the level of need they will either receive targeted family support or child in need support.

Key to the new service will be the joint approach between multidisciplinary and multi-agency professionals who will be supported by a Strengthening Families Social Worker (advanced social work practitioners who work closely with a small group of family support workers and other professionals within communities to provide the most comprehensive support possible at an early stage).

Targeted support

To receive support families will consent to an Early Help Single Assessment completed by lead professional within the early help network to identify level of support needed. In this situation a dedicated family support worker will become the lead professional and work with other agencies to work with the family.

Child in need

This service can be initiated following consent from a family for a Social Worker to complete a Statutory Level Single Assessment which concludes that the threshold is met for child in need support under section 17, Children's Act 1989. This means without support a child's health and development is likely to be impaired.

A Strengthening Families Social Worker will be allocated, whose role will be to complete specific pieces of work and to oversee the plan. The Social Worker will be responsible for reviewing the plan every 4-6 weeks to ensure it remains relevant and effective.

In this situation the family will also be assigned a Family Support Worker to robustly work the plan with the family. Regular reviewing timescales to prevent drift and escalation of concerns is a key element of the service.

Strengthening Families will not work with children supported by the Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) service, Edge of Care, or Edge of Child Protection as systems of support will already be in place.

Implementing the new service

The first stage of the new service commenced on 1 May 2018. The effectiveness of the service and future delivery will be reviewed in September 2018 following an evaluation of the new approach.

By the end of May 2018 there will be a Strengthening Families Team in each district and borough based at the Children & Families buildings but delivering flexible services across the area in homes, schools and some early years' settings.

Plans are in place for future co-location of the teams at Children & Family Centres, along with Youth Workers, health colleagues and other partner agencies. This will provide community support to develop Early Help networks, to oversee less complex child in need cases and to enable a shared understanding of thresholds for services. It should also reduce reliance upon statutory intervention.

The delivery model

Warwickshire will develop a 'pod' system to promote collaboration and support built through joint working and a shared vision to support the child and family with strong focus on outcomes for the child.

In a pod, children will be allocated to the Strengthening Families Social Worker, who will also offer support and consultation to the Family Support Workers, to prevent escalation of issues affecting children at the targeted family support level.

The Strengthening Families Social Worker, as the lead professional with statutory responsibility for Child in Need cases, will oversee the Child In Need plans. Family Support Workers will undertake direct intervention which will include regular family visits, liaising with professionals and closely managing the plan.

Family Support Workers apply multi-disciplinary skills in their work with up to 20 children at any one time, with mixed caseload categorised as Child In Need and targeted support. They help families to identify their own strengths and find ways to build on these to make changes.

Next steps

- Receive evaluation of Strengthening Families Service (October 2018) - make any required adjustments in the light of learning from the evaluation.
- Embed the Strengthening Family procedures and processes across the team to support the delivery model.
- Embed knowledge of Strengthening Families across Children & Families Teams and to external partners including in Phase 2 the developing Children & Families Centres.
- Embed the concept of Strengthening Families within communities alongside the development of Children and Family Centres.
- Develop our information regarding Child in Need and Targeted Family Support populations to continually understand the local profile of Children in Need.
- Establish training within our theory of change including solution focused training and outcome star training to deliver improved outcomes for families.
- Use theory of change to engage families within their plan and their ownership of work and solutions in bringing about change.
- Use Outcome Star to ensure that the voice of the child is represented within their plans and change.

For further information please contact: Jo Sabin (Operations Manager).