

Committee: **Social Services Scrutiny Committee**
Date of meeting: **7th October 2021**
Report Subject: **Children and Communities Grant**
Portfolio Holder: **Councillor John Mason, Executive Member Social Services**
Report Submitted by: **Tanya Evans, Head of Children's Services**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
2.9.21	09.09.21	23.09.21			7.10.21	10.11.21		

1. Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on progress of the Children and Communities Grant (CCG) which sits under the Flexible Funding Programme which came into being April 2019.

2. Scope and Background

2.1 The Flexible Funding programme is the latest approach from Welsh Government (WG) to ensure different grants work together with the aim of providing greater local authority autonomy in service delivery, particularly around joint planning and commissioning of services to support better outcomes. This extra freedom aims to allow for a more strategic approach in delivering early intervention, prevention and support.

2.1.1 The seven programmes that sit under the Children and Communities Grant are:

1. Families First
2. Flying Start
3. Childcare and Play
4. Communities for Work Plus (CfW+)
5. Legacy Fund
6. Promoting Positive Engagement for Young People at Risk of Offending
7. St David's Day Fund

2.1.2 Welsh Government have issued clear Guidance for the delivery of each of the 7 programmes listed above. The budget allocation for each of the 7 programmes can be found under section 5.1 of this report.

2.1.3 In relation to the 7 programmes it is important to note that Communities for work plus (CfW+) is delivered by GAVO not the local authority. This situation is unique to Blaenau Gwent as the other 21 Local Authorities in Wales deliver this

programme in house. That said GAVO have been an active part of the CCG steering group.

2.1.4 This is the third update report presented to scrutiny in relation to the CCG.

2.1.5 This report will focus on

- how services continued to be delivered throughout the pandemic
- and progress made in relation to the CCG delivery plan.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

Option 1

- i. Consider the progress made to date on the Children and Communities grant
- ii. Note the CCG Steering Group continues to oversee and implement the delivery programme and provides an annual report on progress to scrutiny, executive and the new local arrangements to replace the Public Service Board.

Option 2

- i. Consider and **provide specific comments** on the progress made to date on the Children and Communities grant
- ii. Note the CCG Steering Group continues to oversee and implement the delivery programme and provides an annual report on progress to scrutiny, executive and the new local arrangements to replace the Public Service Board.

4. **Evidence of how does this topic support the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

Council Priorities

4.1 The programmes under the CCG focuses on early intervention prevention and support. As such they will support the following priorities outlined under the corporate plan

- To work with people to make sure they have a say in achieving what matters to them
- To intervene early to prevent problems from becoming greater
- To work with our partners including Aneurin Bevan University Health Board and neighbouring authorities to deliver integrated responsive care and support
- To promote and facilitate new ways of delivering health and social care involving key partners and our communities
- To develop a partnership approach to reducing and alleviating the impacts of Poverty

5. Implications Against Each Option

5.1 *Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)*

Figure 1 below outlines the total grant money aligned to each grant for 21/22.

Figure 1

Programme	Budget
Flying Start	£2,234,096
Families First	£1,143,183
Communities 4 Work Plus	£862,600
Legacy Fund	£464,465
Promoting Positive Engagement for YP	£148,016
Childcare and Play	£75,391
St David's Day Fund	£29,428

The CCG steering group meets on a bimonthly basis and receives regular financial information which ensures the grant money is maximised.

5.2 *Risk including Mitigating Actions*

Risk 1 Grants stopping

As with all grant funded projects there is a risk of the grant stopping and services being withdrawn. If this occurred the early needs of children and families would not be met and inevitably escalate requiring statutory interventions.

To mitigate against this each of the programmes under the CCG are supporting families to become more self-determining, drawing on their own naturally occurring support networks. The programmes also work closely with the third sector who also offer preventative services.

5.3 *Legal*

There are no legal issues relating to this report.

5.4 *Human Resources*

All Staff delivering the programmes under the CCG are on 12 month fixed term contracts. These are renewed each year. However many staff have been on fixed term contracts from many years and will have accrued employment rights. This will have a significant impact on the local authority if the CCG grant ended.

6. **Supporting Evidence**

6.1 ***Performance Information and Data***

6.1.1 **How services continued to be delivered throughout the pandemic**

The CCG steering group continued to meet regularly throughout the pandemic. During the early days of the pandemic Welsh Government helpfully issued guidance which stated that CCG programme staff could be used to ensure frontline services were supported and protected. This arrangement continued until September 2020.

6.1.2 **Families First**

At the start of the pandemic all families open to Families First were RAG rated. All those families that were deemed to be RED continued to have face to face visits following robust risk assessment and use of PPE. Virtual contact was maintained with all AMBER and GREEN cases. There is no doubt that this early proactive approach prevented needs from escalating during the pandemic and beyond. Some Families First staff were seconded to work alongside the statutory childcare teams working with children at risk of coming into care and children on the child protection register. All secondments have now ended and services have fully resumed including parenting groups.

6.1.3 **Flying start**

Flying Start also RAG rated their cases, however none of the Flying start health visitors undertook face to face visiting during the early stages of the pandemic as many of them were redeployed to hospitals. To counter this the flying start support workers supported extensive numbers of children and families via Social Media whereby over 1500 users were accessing information, advice and guidance through daily updates via their face book pages and website. Activity packs were also delivered to houses to support parents to continue to develop speech and language skills which is one of the core aims of the flying start programme. The team also produced a number of webinaire on many aspects of parenting. A small number of Flying Start Staff were seconded to adult social services to support adults to remain in the community. These secondments have now ended and all services have now fully resumed.

6.1.4 **Childcare and Play**

The Childcare settings managed by the local authorities remained open throughout the pandemic and in the early stages provided child care to the most vulnerable children and children of key workers. Over all 63% of all child care settings remained open across the board this included local authority/private nurseries and child minders. WG issued many grants to support this sector to ensure they remained sustainable. These grants were expertly managed by the small child care support team. All settings are now fully open and functioning with only a very small number who did not reopen following the early stages of the pandemic.

6.1.5 **Communities for Work Plus (CfW+)**

This programme saw a huge impact on local communities due to a reduction in the numbers of people who were supported into work in the first wave of the pandemic for obvious reasons. However, services continued to be developed in particular the recruitment of a Mental Health Support Worker (MHSW). It has been reported 40 new referrals made to the MHSW and with the support of the MHSW 24 of those referrals have been referred back into employability support services. The MHSW has completed a total of 122 sessions.

6.1.6 **Legacy Fund**

Legacy funds a number of posts that sit in the other programmes under the CCG. These include the Dads workers in Flying Start and the social workers in schools posts. Also it funds a contribution to the citizens advice beaurau. Importantly it also funded 2 workers to be seconded to the locality teams that were set up at the start of the pandemic with the aim of supporting the people of Blaenau Gwent with low level needs for example shopping, picking up medication and sign posting to other services. There is no doubt that the work of the locality teams dealt with very low level needs to prevent them from escalating.

6.1.7 **Promoting Positive Engagement for Young People at Risk of Offending**

This programme includes projects such as the Youth Offending Service REACH programme, the Children Looked After reparation worker and Phoenix Youth Respect Project (3rd Sector-led Young Person's Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Project). Throughout the pandemic service delivery was done virtually by remote ways of working. The main priority has been to support children's well-being; this has led to the delivery of well-being packs through the Positive Futures Programme.

6.1.8 **St David's Day Fund**

This fund is specifically used to support care leavers. During the pandemic the fund has been used to provide emergency finances for access to food and/or utilities, provide financial support to ensure tenancies are protected, access to the internet and an internet equipped devices, financial assistance for travel to visit family members. The 14 plus team who are responsible for managing this fund continued to visit all care leavers face to face during the pandemic to ensure their needs were met and they were safe.

6.1.9 **Progress made in relation to the CCG delivery plan.**

Each year the local authority has to send a delivery plan into Welsh Government. Within this is an action plan which the CCG steering group monitors to ensure progress throughout the year

The Action Plan with updates can be seen under **Appendix 1**. Good progress has been made on these actions considering we are still dealing with a pandemic.

6.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***

The public can expect the programmes delivered under the CCG to meet the requirements as laid out from Welsh Government.

All of the programmes focus on early intervention. Prevention and support

6.3 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***

The CCG guidance requires local authority to set out how they intend to engage with and involve local communities and use their responses to inform their long term vision and delivery plans. All of the programmes under the CCG have systems in place to gather feedback on services being delivered. Some programmes are also using social media to support with this from example flying Start have a face book to promote the service and receive feedback.

6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***

The CCG Steering group will ensure the delivery plan for 20/21 encompasses the five was of working under the future generation act which includes planning for the long term.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

One of the primary aims of the programmes delivered under the CCG is to prevent needs from escalating. This not only relates to preventing families requiring the interventions from Statutory Services but also working with families to support them of poverty via routes to employment.

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

As part of the work going forward the Local authority will need to demonstrate how we ensure the programmes under the CCG grant is aligning with the well-being objectives of the Public Services Board and the aims of other key partners and how evidence from the well-being plans and needs assessments have been incorporated. It is important to demonstrate that this grant is providing additional support for the most disadvantaged.

6.7 ***Integration (across service areas)***

The strategic use of grants review includes all service areas and the work undertaken to date aims to bring improved organisational sight of grant funding to maximise this funding stream.

6.8 ***Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions***

The workforce who deliver the programmes under the CGG have adopted the agile working policy of the council which will have a positive impact on car emissions as staff are now able to work from home to undertake paperwork and do not have to travel to the office.

6.9 ***Socio Economic Duty Impact Assessment***

All programmes that sit under CCG work with families who are subject to socio economic disadvantages for example, low income, material and area deprivation. All programmes work towards addressing these disadvantages.

6.10 ***Equality Impact Assessment***

The CCG programmes work with many children and families who have protected characteristics.

The overarching vision of the CCG's seven core programmes is to support the needs of the most vulnerable children and adults in our communities through a range of early intervention, prevention and support mechanisms. With the aim of building resilient individuals, resilient families and resilient communities.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 Welsh Government require quarterly reporting on progress. This will include reporting on outcomes from April 2020 under the new framework being developed by Welsh Government

In addition the CCG steering group will oversee the delivery of the programmes and provide an annual report to CLT scrutiny, executive and the PSB

Background Documents / Electronic Links

Appendix 1 – Action Plan

Appendix 1



Updated Action
Plan 2122.docx