

Committee: **Public Services Board Scrutiny Committee**  
Date of meeting: **25<sup>th</sup> February 2021**  
Report Subject: **Welsh Government Early Years Integration Transformation Programme Pilot Childcare Offer – Joint working Pilot – Blaenau Gwent Pathfinder**  
Portfolio Holder: **Cllr N Daniels, Leader of the Council**  
Report Submitted by: **Glyn Jones, Deputy Chief Executive Aneurin Bevan University Health Board  
Ceri Bird, Service Manager Blaenau Gwent CBC**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
Y	Y	14.02.21			25.02.21			PSB

1. **Purpose of the Report**  
To update Members on the progress made to date on the Welsh Government's new Early Years Integration Transformation Pilot in the Blaenau Gwent Pathfinder area.
- 2 **Scope and Background**
  - 2.1 The Early Years Integration Transformation Pilot (EYITP) emerged out of a recognition by Welsh Government that there was need to address the inequalities in early years' services across Wales and develop a fluid, responsive early year's system that will ensure every child in Wales has the best start in life.
  - 2.2 The period of life from pre-birth to the end of the Foundation Phase, or 0-7 years of age, is a critical part of childhood. It is widely agreed that early childhood experiences are crucially important for children's long-term development and their achievements in later life. At these times children and their families have regular contact with a number of different services such as midwifery, health visiting, various family support workers, childcare and early years' education provision etc. These services are currently accountable to different bodies and can work independently without sharing information or coordinating their support to families. Distinctions and boundaries in the ways of working that mean something to professionals can appear complex, unequal, arbitrary and frustrating to the parent or child in need of help.
  - 2.3 Welsh Government and Early Years Professionals across Wales recognise it is vitally important that we develop a more holistic approach to early years' services across Wales. An approach that ensures services delivered before birth and in the early years work together in an integrated, multi-agency way to nurture children, support parents and promote child development in the broadest sense. This will improve the immediate impact for families and develop better longer term outcomes for our children.

- 2.4 Locally in Blaenau Gwent, “The Best Start in Life for Everyone” is one of the Blaenau Gwent Public Service Board (PSB) Wellbeing Objectives for 2018-2023. One of the key steps the Public Service Board said they wished to take forward in the Wellbeing Plan in order to meet this objective was: “To understand more about Early Years Services in Blaenau Gwent including their quality and where the gaps are”.
- 2.5 Blaenau Gwent Public Service Board (PSB) agreed to become a pathfinder for the Early Years Integrated Transformation Pilot in June 2019. The Board agreed it would have the main governance and oversight for the Blaenau Gwent element of the pilot through Mr Glyn Jones, Deputy Chief Executive of Aneurin Bevan University Health Board (ABUHB), who is the PSB sponsor for the ‘Best Start in Life’ priority in Blaenau Gwent. Blaenau Gwent CBC Corporate Leadership Team has accountability for the element of funding awarded to BGCBC through this grant.
- 2.6 The Regional Early Years Transformation Steering Board oversees the regional footprint element of the Early Years Integration Transformation Programme and the fluid work between Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, Caerphilly Borough Council and Newport City Council and liaises directly with Welsh Government.
- 2.7 It was agreed by Blaenau Gwent PSB in January 2020 that Phase 1 of the pilot in Blaenau Gwent would be a small pilot to test the model in the self-contained village of Cwm, Ebbw Vale then following a successful pilot in Cwm, Phase 2 would be in the Brynmawr / Nantyglo (Winchestown) area which currently has no Flying Start infrastructure. The size of phase 2 and the number of children that could be accommodated in phase 2 would be dependent on the award of funding from Welsh Government in 21/22.
- 2.8 Following the in-depth work with Vanguard Consulting in October 2019, when we looked at the need for strategic change with a focus on improving services whilst making efficiencies, a new way of working evolved which would focus on:
- No discrimination on who is eligible for support,
  - No Flying Start or generic areas,
  - The family receiving the support they need when they require it,
  - A strengths based model and ‘What Matters to Families’,
  - Ensuring consistency in the form of a one keyworker approach right through the 0-7-year period of a child’s life following the Healthy Child Wales model,
  - Automatic access to a multi-agency team of professionals who are easily accessible and based in the local community without the need for referrals into other teams / services, unless needs escalate;
  - Enhanced midwife support from 12 weeks’ gestation;
  - Enhanced early support for early language development from the antenatal period;
  - Coordinated support from the Community Psychiatric Nurse (CPN), Primary and Infant Mental Health Support Team (PIMHS), Clinical Psychology,

Additional Learning Needs Team, Speech and Language Therapist (SaLT), Dads Support Worker all within the team with no referrals needed;

- Complex cases would be brought to the “What Matters Team” for multi-agency discussion and action;
- Fluid sharing of data between agencies to prevent duplication and the family having to repeat their story;
- Development of a digital platform and app that is consistent with parent’s ways of preferring to communicate in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

### 3.0 **Progress to Date**

- 3.1 Phase 1 of the pilot went live in September 2020. Cwm was chosen by the PSB as it is a self-contained village with a definitive divide between the 2 LSOAs that make up the community. One LSOA is Flying Start and the other non-Flying Start. The new model has brought services together in an integrated way, so they are readily available and accessible to the whole community as they need them without the problem of the Flying Start / non Flying Start geographical divide.
- 3.2 Welcome packs and letters introducing the pilot were hand delivered to the families in Cwm with children under 5 who were not living in Flying Start area through the Summer 2020. Doorstep discussions were held with them explaining they would now be able to access all the services provided by Flying Start and run from the Flying Start Cwm Hub with the exception of childcare.
- 3.3 Feedback from families was extremely positive and evidenced they now felt listened too, not separated from friends and neighbours who lived in Flying Start areas and happy they were now able to access services when they needed them, rather than being dependant on postcode eligibility.
- 3.4 The pilot core team was also established in September 2020 and consists of the Flying Start and Generic Midwives, the Flying Start and Generic Health Visitors, a Family Support Worker, a Clinical Psychologist, the Community Psychiatric Nurse, a Dads Support Worker and the Project Coordinator. Other agencies are invited to attend team discussions when the cases being discussed might necessitate that additional support. Wider support might be in the form of Families First, Supporting People, other housing support, Communities 4 Work, Bridges into Work, various financial support services, ALN support, Speech and Language Therapist, Play Therapy, Parent Infant Mental Health, substance misuse services, domestic abuse support etc.
- 3.5 Despite the pilot needing to be delivered in a different way due to the pandemic, we have still managed to successfully launch the pilot and bring the team together virtually every Monday morning for the “What Matters Meetings”.
- 3.6 The “What Matters Meetings” have been successful in opening up services to all families with children 0-5 years in Cwm regardless of postcode. The meetings bring together services in an integrated way to avoid multiple visits to families by different services and this reduces a delay in support. The pilot has been able to increase local based support for generic families with a named

support worker or dad's worker and ultimately opening up responsive specialist services for all families without the need for waiting lists.

- 3.7 Early feedback from generic staff is that they are feeling more responsive and able to bring in additional support quicker and Flying Start staff are able to focus on what matters to the family rather than being restricted to the 4 core elements of the FS programme.
- 3.8 The one issue that has been problematic is that both Health Visitors have split caseloads so half their caseload is for families in Cwm and the other half in other areas of Blaenau Gwent. Both Health Visitors have stated they have families outside the pilot area that would hugely benefit from being part of the pilot to access the additional support. The Health Visitors felt it was causing an additional barrier to them by having to work inside and outside the model. Both Health Visitors have requested that all their caseload be included in the pilot as soon as possible and both work to one core programme.
- 3.9 To do the above would mean bringing the following numbers into the pilot; -
- 77 extra generic children from the Waunlwyd, Tyllwyn, Victoria/Garden City area with the Generic Health Visitors caseload.
  - 22 Flying Start Children from the Aberbeeg area with the Flying Start Health Visitors caseload.
- 3.10 Discussions were held with Welsh Government and senior leaders responsible for this area within ABUHB and BGCBC Social Services who felt this was a sensible approach and so we are looking for the approval of BGCBC PSB to do this from March 2021. The staffing structure is already in place as those staff working in the pilot already hold these cases.
- 3.11 Other successes to date are; -
- More focus on the Blaenau Gwent Flying Start electronic birth book and ABUHB Responsive Feeding pilot to bring the registration age to 12 weeks after conception to track the child and provide support at the earliest possible stage. This will also enable the accurate planning and allocation of workloads with the aim of ensuring that no family is missed out.
  - A new system called Badger Net is being developed. This new system will have an app which pregnant mums can access. This system will communicate with the current WCCIS system which already enables information to be shared with the wider Children's Services Teams. It has been agreed with ABUHB for Health to test a model and start using WCCIS with a link to Blaenau Gwent to create a one file system; this will be a phased approach starting with antenatal and new births within Cwm in 2021. Blaenau Gwent is in a unique position as will be the first pathfinder to pilot this model as we already use WCCIS for Flying Start.

- Feedback from families throughout the first 4 months of the pilot have shown that families want easy to understand information and the current system of so many different groups and programmes can be difficult for them to navigate. In response to this in Blaenau Gwent we have started designing an easy read road map for the early year's period of a child's life with the important activities, tips and advice that can help ensure that children have the best start in life, this is currently in draft form. We are also exploring the possibility of having this as an app for their phone where they will have interactive models of engagement and alerts to important milestones in the child's life.
- A one page 'What Matters' document has been created in partnership with consultation from the BG core 'What Matters' team and Rhoda Emlyn Jones of ASC Ltd to ensure the programme has a clear outcome based approach and links in to Healthy Child Wales framework and the wider work of BG Children's Services so we are all working to the strengths approach.
- Blaenau Gwent Flying Start programme has proven that social media is an invaluable way of engaging with families with its Facebook page having over 2000 members with 1524 active members this quarter alone. 488 posts have been created by staff. These have attracted 1,032 comments and 2,985 reactions.

Families have told us through the pandemic the page has been a "lifeline" for them and it's been "reassuring" to see their HV and support worker. The page was opened up to non-Flying Start families at the start of the pandemic as part of this pilot to ensure there is no inequality or discrimination and those families who need the support in the early years of their child's life in Blaenau Gwent can access it. Members have increased by 66%. In February 2020 the page had 1,358 members (Flying Start have around 1000 children) and as at January 2021 there were 2060 members this shows so many generic families are now using the page for support.

Public engagement on the page has increased by 17% since September 2020. As families cannot visit our hubs, staff deliver online group interactive sessions, demonstrations of the various care packages, hold virtual coffee mornings, baby and toddler groups, question and answer sessions with midwife, health visitors, support workers etc.

- Each childcare setting has its own page so children can keep in touch with their keyworker and join in with their play. Settings send home Play Packs so they can be used during the interactive sessions.
- The focus of the pilot is also on co-production of community provision, where local groups are developed and run by the community, instead of creating a dependence on an organisation or/ staff team to deliver a group. In partnership with Families First we have established Cwm Parenting Network which will encourage the network members to take up

training to be able to run their own groups and also start developing their own skills and aspirations to create a better future for themselves and their family. This helps the Authorities objective of Building Resilient Communities

- Work has been undertaken to build the community's resilience based on what parents/carers and guardians have told us what matters to them. For expecting women and new mums this has meant the ability to meet others in similar situations. This has resulted in the launch of walking groups (before lockdown) and virtual peer support groups with the first starting on the 27<sup>th</sup> January 2021.
- To understand more about our Early Years Services in Blaenau Gwent we have signed up to use the Early Intervention Foundation (EIF) Maturity Matrix Survey which went out to all strategic and operational stakeholders working in the Early Years 0-7 sector within Blaenau Gwent earlier this month. This will enable us to develop a baseline from which to track progress within the current early year's services. Following the survey, a stakeholder's event was held to explore and vote on topics within the matrix to establish local priorities. These results will be collected and presented to the EIF in the form of an action plans for validation which will feed into the Early Year Transformation Project.

3.12 As we move through the Covid 19 Pandemic, Pediatricians are noting developmental delays as well as the potential for long-term health consequences in children, particularly those from low-income households. Children are not getting the cognitive and social stimulation that they would normally get outside their homes. Health officials inform us that the pandemic has caused young children to miss opportunities for developmental milestones and language development, which has prompted Welsh Government to make available extra funding to local authorities in the form of the Child Development Fund.

3.13 With many parents undergoing financial stress, children face higher rates of housing and food insecurity. And others are subject to rising rates of neglect and household dysfunction – all of which can affect a child's trajectory into adulthood. Numerous studies have shown that early life experience and adverse life events have had a negative impact on the health and development of children. This pilot is more important than ever to be there to support from the earliest possible stage of 12 weeks' gestation and ensure that all families are having the consistent support they need in a coordinated, responsive and jointed up approach.

#### 4. NEXT STEPS

4.1 The Welsh Government confirmed continuation of the roll out of the pilots across Wales for 2021/22 on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2020 and have asked for more Local Authorities across Wales to become pathfinders and for current pathfinders to expand to include more areas.

- 4.2 The award of £350,000 for 21/ 22 was confirmed to be split between Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, Blaenau Gwent CBC, Caerphilly CBC and Newport CC plus and additional £50, 000 for each Project Coordinator role.
- 4.3 The funding will mean that the proposed expansion of the Cwm Pilot to include the full pilot Health Visitors caseloads as detailed above could go ahead. It will also mean that from April 1<sup>st</sup> the previously agreed roll out of Phase 2 into Brynmawr 2 (Bryn Farm) and Nantyglo 1 (Winchestown) could go ahead the size of which is dependent on funding and caseload numbers. Concerns have already been raised to Welsh Government that without further investment this wider roll out may need to be reduced.
- 4.4 Work will continue to explore how the current IT infrastructure can be developed to ensure inter-agency information is accessible so we support the family with 'What Matters' to them, avoiding duplication of visits, duplication of questioning and information gathering and ultimately providing a better service in a more cost-effective way.
- 4.5 Welsh Government have commissioned external company Miller Research to evaluate all the pilots across Wales drawing on the information that is collected through the 'What Matters' meetings, WCCIS and Health Records and from the families themselves. Welsh Government will then evaluate all models across Wales and determine next steps which will also depend on the political landscape and agenda.
- 4.6 As a Gwent group we feel our model is not only empowering families but it's a model that is financially sustainable with the ability to be rolled out throughout Wales so that every family can access the help and support they need regardless of postcode.

## 5. **Options for Recommendation**

### 5.1 Option 1

That the Public Services Board Scrutiny Committee considers the proposed roll-out outlined for 2021 and make comments to the PSB before approval.

### Option 2

That the Public Services Board Scrutiny Committee considers the proposed roll-out outlined for 2021 and make specific recommendations to the PSB before approval.

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

This programme supports the Corporate Plan under the Social Services priority “To promote and facilitate new ways of delivering health and social care involving key partners and our communities”.

The Blaenau Gwent Well-being plan lists as one of its five objectives ‘The best start in life for everyone’. Key to this priority is aligning services to mitigate equality.

7. **Implications Against Each Option**

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

Funding is allocated from Welsh Government on a Health Board footprint basis and is managed by Caerphilly County Borough Council as the grant recipients. In 20/21 Blaenau Gwent received £50,000 to fund the project coordinators role and £48,000 for staffing infrastructure. Aneurin Bevan University Health Board received regional funding to support the cost of additional health visiting, CPN and midwifery support for Blaenau Gwent.

7.2 The funding for 21/22 has been confirmed as £50,000 for the project coordinators role and an indicative grant allocation up to a maximum of £388,642 has been confirmed for the Gwent Pathfinders. How this will be allocated across Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Newport and ABUHB has not been agreed by the Regional Steering Board. The additional funding will have to support the current Cwm pilot, the proposed additional cases in Cwm plus the roll out of the pilot into Brynmawr / Nantyglo area so caseload will be based on the allocation and will then be determined by the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation and the Lower Super Output Areas in these towns that feature in the highest brackets. Resources are in place to move to the next stage of the pilot.

7.3 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

- That synchronising organisations and programmes will be too complex and the pilot will have to be abandoned.
- Funding may limit scope to roll out into the areas that really need it.
- That COVID 19 will have a third wave and the Pilot will be paused or abandoned.

7.4 ***Legal***

Welsh Government provide full terms and Conditions of the grant. The grant will not allow for redundancy costs.



7.5 **Human Resources**

Fully funded by this Welsh Government grant.

8. **Supporting Evidence**

8.1 **Performance Information and Data**

Not yet provided as pilot in its infancy

8.2 **Expected outcome for the public**

In the long term a more joined-up, responsive early years system leading to better outcomes for children.

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

Welsh Government has undertaken extensive consultation with stakeholders and aims to involve service providers and parents joining forward.

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

An approach that ensures services delivered before birth and in the early years work together in an integrated, multi-agency way to nurture children, support parents and promote child development in the broadest sense. This will improve the immediate impact for families and develop better longer term outcomes for children.

8.5 **Preventative focus**

There is compelling evidence, for example from Professor James Heckmann and Professor Sir Michael Marmot, that demonstrates the effectiveness, value and high return on investment in early years intervention programmes in tackling inequalities, giving children the best start in life and improving the development of children and their prospects in adulthood.

The benefits from early intervention are vast, but not exclusive to disadvantaged children and families. Early action can bring cost effective benefits by reducing the knock-on costs of expensive health, social care, criminal justice and welfare support later in life.

8.6 **Collaboration / partnership working**

This programme is very much focused on collaboration and partnership working. The three Local Authorities chosen for this pilot, Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly and Newport are working together and we have excellent strong historic working relationships with Swansea and Flintshire who have also been chosen as pilot authorities and were also our colleagues for Childcare Offer pilot.

8.7 **Integration (across service areas)**

We have held the first workshop in Blaenau Gwent and are working alongside the Education Dept, Governance, EAS and Health. To ensure integration between services for children aged 0-7.

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## 10. **Monitoring Arrangements**

- 12.1 Blaenau Gwent Public Service Board will have the main governance and oversight for the local element of the Early Years Integration Transformation Programme through Mr Glyn Jones who is the PSB sponsor for the 'Best Start In Life' priority.

Blaenau Gwent CBC Corporate Leadership Team will have accountability for the funding awarded through this grant as well as other grant decisions and commissioning. Blaenau Gwent Social Services Senior Management Team will hold operational accountability.

### **Background Documents /Electronic Links**

#### **EIF Maturity Matrix**

<https://www.eif.org.uk/resource/eif-maturity-matrix-maternity-and-early-years>.