

Minutes of the Renew and Refresh Strabane Locality Planning Group Held on Thursday 25 February 2021 at 10am on Zoom

Present:

Riognach Murphy - Barnardo's (LPG Chair)
Donna McGee – MACE project
Sean McMonagle – DCSDC
Claire Lynch – DCSDC
Clive Beatty – PSNI
Mary McNicholl – CHILD Project Rapid NI
Shauna Devine – Strabane FSH/Strabane Family Centre
Alana Willis – CCMS
Sharon Callaghan – Strabane Sure Start
Adrian Loughrey – Koram Centre
Rose O'Brien – EA
Claire Doherty – Holy Cross College
Aodhán Harkin – Strabane Neighbourhood Renewal Growth Partnership
Natasha Burke – Action for Children EISS
Roisin Hamill – Foyle Women's Aid
Una Casey - CYPSP

Apologies

Rois Lynch, Cast Cic
Brenda McAneeny – Melmount Forum
Emma-Jane Hagger – Kinship Care NI
Chris Kerr – MAN – NI
Lorraine Bull - PSNI

Welcome and Introductions – Riognach welcomes everyone and gave background to the meeting today. A round of introductions took place. Members noted that they felt that the LPG had lost some traction and hadn't met for some time. Riognach noted that dates have been set for the rest of the year and hoped that this will help engagement in the group.

Apologies – were listed as above

What is CYPSP and LPGs – Una gave a presentation giving background to the role and purpose and priorities for the regional

CYPSP and how the different parts of the structure fits together, the linkages between the LPG and Family Support Hubs. The purpose of LPGs, TOR and examples of achievements of LPGs in other areas. (See attached presentation). Rioghnach reiterated the importance of members coming together to identify needs and gaps and how to address these at the local level. A discussion took place about sharing data at pre-school and nursery ages and the importance of members sharing data that they have. A discussion took place about information held by all members and the issues about sharing it due to GDPR and if a data sharing agreement is needed for LPG.

Action: Una to get information on data sharing

Western Area Outcomes Group Update – Una gave an update on the priorities of the WAOG which are:

- All children and young people will have the best start in life and are emotionally and physically healthy
- All children and young people are safe and their welfare is promoted within their homes, schools and communities
- All children and young people are supported to thrive and achieve their full potential.

The Outcomes Group held a workshop on Wednesday to work on identifying actions against these 3 priorities, there will be task and finish groups to take these forward. Una also gave an update on the small grants funding recently carried out.

Western Area Outcomes Group are funding Trauma informed Schools to deliver training across the Western Area, further information will be circulated in the next FYI

WAOG also has some funding available towards Period Poverty. It has been suggested that the funding is transferred to the LPG chair's organisations so that they can purchase products through InKind and then to distribute these out through LPG members for any girls to access.

Family Support Hub Updates – Shauna gave an update about the types of referrals over the past year. High level of covid specific support, mostly financial support and emotional health and wellbeing. Q1: 241 individuals through the hub. Q2: 101 individuals supported. Q3: 73 supported. Q4. 126 individuals so far this. Still increase of referrals for covid related support. Sources of referrals CAMHS, EWOs, schools,

community groups, Gateway, health visitors, other voluntary agencies, referrals from pediatrics, Western area EISS, and other hub members including SureStart and FIS. Low level of FIS referrals, working with them to build partnership for step down cases. Key issues; almost every referrals has had elements of anxiety and emotional management; trying to source support for children and young people, has been challenging. Many services have adapted to work with children and young people remotely, but sometimes children don't like this, especially younger children or children who hasn't needed a service before. Attempted to address this through referrals to the family centre, Koram and EISS for support and some have been able to move to face to face within the current restrictions. Referrals for parenting issues, and managing challenging behaviours, especially early teens. Also had referrals for ASD support which has been an ongoing issue pre-covid too. Waiting lists for ASD and ADHD assessments are very long. Increase in referrals for financial and practical support. The FSH worked along with local community group to deliver specific support to 52 families which equated to 86 parents and 102 children through family activity groups during lockdown. Also supported 34 children through Strabane Family Centre calm skills group, which looks at anxiety and emotional management. Providing some ASD support remotely which has worked well. Trying to adapt support to a time that suits the family. Highlight work with GP Social Workers to run a Webinar this Tuesday night (2 March) at 7pm with Bronagh Starrs, to talk about parenting children and young people who are experiencing anxiety. FSH meetings has adapted to bridge gap when LPGs meetings weren't running. Will adapt hub meetings in future now LPGs are meeting again.

Action: Shauna to send information to Una for circulation to members.

Member Updates

Adrian - Koram Centre – noted challenge of engaging with younger children 5-10 year olds, and whether they are able to engage or if it is responsible to engage with them remotely. Engaging young children with high anxiety remotely could increase their anxiety. In some of these instances have offered support to their parents who are anxious themselves. Currently delivering a Mental Health Resilience programme through a CBT therapist. Full at the moment. Identified one of the weeks will focus on how to work with anxious children. Seeing an increase in children's anxiety. Reassure parents that doing their best is good enough. ASD waiting lists are very high, service is picking up

many of these children presenting with anxiety but at root of that is their ASD. Not always the best service for them. Need to make sure they are not an ASD service. Massive need in Strabane.

Sharon - Sure Start - Noted that Strabane needs an assessment centre there, as families have to travel to Omagh or Derry, waiting lists have been massive for years, parents are so stressed and aren't getting enough support. Would be good if this group could take this forward. Need for early intervention for these children. Would like to be able to input into the children's wellbeing. Very aware of children who will need additional support. Would like faster process that SureStart can feed into to enable children to get the support they need sooner, e.g. class room assistant or go to the right service for nursery.

Rose – EA EWO – Also noted a lot of pupils who have no diagnosis at transition from primary to post-primary, really struggle and escalates into challenging behaviours and school refusals, can result in children not completing their education. Definitely a need in Strabane for more focused support for ASD to meet the needs for young people.

Shauna – FSH – referrals from parents who feel like they are bad parents and are failing their children; they are looking for support for their children but there just isn't any. Even if they have a diagnosis often the support isn't there either. Very challenging and increasing issues.

Natasha - EISS – offers a 12 weeks service, many referrals for anxiety, ASD, school attendance, lot of mental health needs too. Anxiety and ASD is a big issue for the children and parents referred, both pre- and post-diagnosis. Parents feel like they are failing. Noted ASD support groups and helplines. Also sometimes feel like you are failing families as a professional too. Local support is really needed.

Donna - Tusla - noted that MACEs has a substantial amount of funding to spend in Strabane on interventions for children and families work with members to channel funding in best way possible. Donna noted that the conversation about ASD very similar to those taking place in Donegal, where 20% of all family support referrals relate to ASD. Happy to work in conjunction with members on this. Recently had a meeting with services in Strabane as MACE project has universal, targeted and specialist interventions. The view at that meeting was that there was a massive need for targeted and specialist services. There is a menu of interventions. Caveat that for targeted interventions needs a trauma/ACE aware assessment. In Donegal it was highlighted that if

working with families who are already struggling and you mention that they feel like they are being blamed. Funding relating to ACEs need to have professional working with a family to complete this. Can also do a single tender action to purchase whatever service is needed to address a need raised by a group. Some services in Western Trust highlighted the need for intensive family support, currently looking at that. Will work with this group to fill gaps identified. If members can identify other services addressing identified need from other areas would be useful to hear about those too. MACE works on the 10 ACEs in the original study but also take into account the impact of the Troubles, transgenerational trauma etc. also option of “other.”

Riognach noted that this was a great opportunity for Strabane.

Action: Donna to share list via Una to members
Action: Una to contact WHSCT ASD service for information on Strabane

Claire – Holy Cross – highlighted that schools need an ASD unit attached to them, but these are really limited places and children need a diagnosis. Currently only available in schools in Derry. Only 6 places in behaviour support unit in Strabane for EOTAS.

Adrian noted that the frustration is the length of time to wait for diagnosis, but feels that there isn't much a group like the LPG can do about this as it's a statutory requirement. Need to focus on programmes to support parents.

Shauna noted that the Family Centre has had staff trained to deliver incredible years for ASD. Tried to adapt services through different training. Needs to be more wide reaching.

Sharon noted Middletown Autism Centre and that it might be useful for this group to link with the centre.

Una suggested an ASD themed meeting to include Middletown and Autism NI.

Action: Una to contact Middletown Autism Centre to attend next meeting.

Riognach noted anxiety is definitely an emerging theme, including parental anxiety, children's anxiety; also that lockdown for some children has relieved their anxiety but are now facing going back to school.

Rose - EA – also noticed that some children’s anxiety has been alleviated due to lockdown, e.g. social anxiety and home life has become more settled; but then other children are more anxious. Expecting massive amounts of anxiety when schools reopen due to Covid and return to school in general. Linking with heads of year in each school. Lists of children who might need some extra support. Need to work with schools if children are presenting differently. If not in school will do garden-gate visit.

Alana – CCMS - Schools have been given guidance about wellbeing first, connecting with friends, getting outside, and to not mention catching up, lost learning etc. also need to get messages to parents. Need to focus on relationships. DE have issued guidance today for P1-P3, benefits of play based learning etc. is included in this. There are some streams of funding available to schools to help with this.

Riognnach enquired about anxiety and if services have capacity to deal with this.

Adrian noted that he has discussed with parents that anxiety about going back to school is a normal response. Need to normalize this and get children back to enjoying school. Need to make sure that we are not putting children into counselling when it isn’t needed. It is important to gauge the level of anxiety that children and young people have.

Rose – language is important, rather than using the term “anxiety” would say are they feeling nervous or have butterflies in their tummy, make them realise that its ok to feel like that. Need to help parents understand this and ensure that there isn’t transference from parent to child.

Mary – CHILD project RAPID – offer universal support for families from pregnancy through to second transition into education. Also offer community development support. Role is working in rural areas to encourage sustainability to run own projects. Have a budget to help support rural schools. Received £85K warm, well and connected funding so hasn’t used other budgets which is there to use. If members work with schools in Faughan, Derg and Sperrin areas. Running a lot of 4-6 week programmes with parents. Volunteers in community sector are exhausted. Mary invited members to contact her if they are aware of any children who are in schools in other areas who would benefit from a tablet, internet etc.

Sean – DCSDC - terms of covid response work, if there are children attending schools in Strabane town but lives in a rural area that have issues of connection can help these children. One positive from Covid has been the interaction between services both in rural and urban areas. Sean queried if there needs to be linkages with the youth forum in the area. Need for synergy between various groups in the area, and suggested have the groups linked together at regular times. Need to avoid multiple groups.

Any Other Business

E-zine articles, FYIs

Una explained that the FYIs will be produced weekly and invited members to send any flyers or information that they would like to share with other members to send these to her.

Action: Sean to send Una information about financial support services for inclusion in the next FYI

If any members have anything they would like to include information in the regional E-zine please send through to Una.

Future Meetings

All meetings will be held at 10am on:

Thursday 25 March

Thursday 27 May

Thursday 24 June

Thursday 26 August

Thursday 28 October