

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

**Present:**

Riognach Murphy - Barnardo's (LPG Chair)  
Una Casey – CYPSP  
Claire Doherty – Holy Cross College  
Donna McGee – MACE project  
Sharon Callaghan – Strabane Sure Start  
Mary McNicholl - Rapid  
Alana Willis – CCMS  
Rose O'Brien – EA  
Sean McMonagle – DCSDC  
Shauna Devine – Strabane FSH/Strabane Family Centre  
Adrian Loughrey – Koram Centre  
Ivan Barr - Melmount Forum  
Brenda McAnenny – Melmount Forum  
Paula Kee - Administration (minute taker)

**In attendance**

Marie McCool – Autism NI Presentation

**Apologies**

Clive Beatty – PSNI  
Claire Lynch – DCSDC  
Natasha Burke – Action for Children EISS

**Welcome and Introductions** – Riognach welcomed everyone to the meeting and queried if everyone had received minutes from the last meeting. Una provided update from actions. There were no amendments to the minutes and these were seconded by Sharon.

Una advised that Margaret Ferris WHSCT ASD Service was unable to attend and will be in touch in the future to attend another meeting.

**Apologies** – as listed above

**Autism NI Presentation** - Marie McCool, Resource Office gave a presentation on Autism Services. Rioghnach thanked Marie for her very informative presentation and asked if anyone had any questions.

The following questions were discussed:

- Where you can go to get a private diagnosis.
- Can parents contact Autism NI if they are concerned and are waiting on a diagnosis or waiting for an assessment to get support
- How long the process was for a private diagnosis
- If families go private for a diagnosis would they be entitled to services via the Public Sector
- Does Autism NI collect statistics and how many children approximately were currently waiting for a diagnosis?
- If Autism NI got a call from a family in Strabane that had a child they felt needed a diagnosis and were on a waiting list where would they signpost them to.
- Can other family members attend training?
- Is training free to the public.
- Has the Helpline seen an increase in calls due to the Covid Pandemic?
- Can Helpline calls be broken down according to Trusts and how many calls do they received from the Western Trust.
- How can you access the Teach programme?

#### Actions Agreed

- Marie to forward Una link for Support Groups.
- Marie to check with her Manager (Kelly) about figures for children waiting for a diagnosis in the Strabane area.
- Marie to ask her Manager (Kelly) for a breakdown of Helpline calls for the Western Trust before and after the Pandemic.
- Marie to ask her Manager (Kelly) for price of Teach Training

#### **Family Support Hub Updates and Member Updates**

##### Strabane FSH/Strabane Family Centre

Shauna advised that today's update would be focusing on this quarter.

Shauna advised that the Hub is starting to pick up and there has been 43 referrals to date which equates to 126 people that they have offered support which breaks down to 27 children and 52 parents. Shauna

noted that they tend to have more children referred but there's a lot of requests for parenting support and she believed that was around trying to manage behaviour and transition back to school which people are struggling with. The Hub had 74 other children benefiting indirectly and quite a few telephone enquiries and advice which have been signposted on without the need for anything further in terms of support.

The Covid activity in relation to Finance support is starting to reduce they have had 14 requests. Referrals continue to come from the same sources; GP Social Workers, GP Multi-disciplinary team, Mental Health Practitioners within GP teams, Gateway, EWO and a lot of self-referrals. Shauna advised that referrals are down to a mixture of things i.e. people knowing about their services, people who have been supported before, people who know someone who has been supported, people being signposted to the Hub by other professionals that they are involved with and make contact themselves.

Shauna advised that in terms of gaps and what she talked about at the last meeting and what was talked about today there are concerns around lack of ASD support in the Strabane area, there are resources in Derry which can't access in Strabane. There also seeing reluctance in engaging remotely, which was different to what Marie was saying. Shauna stated that hub members were finding that when they advise parents of the support available and noted that it was not available face to face at the minute, people are reluctant. Some have agreed to remote delivery then members are getting letters back from refers to say the the parent/child has changed their minds as they don't think it's for them or they want to wait. Shauna stated that zoom fatigue is setting in for a lot of people and children are finding that particularly difficult. Specifically in relation to children with ASD and there has been referrals through for people looking social outlets for children or things children can get involved in.

Shauna advised that what was also concerning was children had to retreat into their home and the online world which people spent a lot of time discouraging and now for a year they've been telling children they have to do it so are finding that transition back difficult.

Shauna advised that they are continuing to see referrals for anxiety for children who have ASD but also in children who don't. She explained that the FSH continue to offer and find support for families and do that on the basis of what people are presenting to them. Shauna advised that they continue to signpost people towards EISS, Strabane Family Centre,

Koram Centre if Counselling services are available and have made referrals to Mary at Rapid in relation to families with younger children and live outside the Sure Start catchment area. Shauna advised that there are a number of groups starting to run within the Family Centre that they've been signposting families towards. E.g. Circle of Security, CAMHS Skills and ASD Group that they run within the Family Centre as well as the Parenting Teens Programme that will offer support for children aged 11 to 13 year olds.

Riognach thanked Shauna for her update and picked up on what she had said and also the MACE Tender that Donna referred to. Riognach advised that she has received calls in relation to counselling services and noted that Barnardo's offer this in other Trust areas but it wasn't possible in the West. Riognach advised that it was counselling for all ages and in terms of anxiety. She was unsure if there were any organisations that think they have capacity to consider that and noted that counselling in ASD is very specialised but maybe there was an organization that already has a counselling aspect that feel they might have an opportunity to expand.

Donna noted that it would be worth everyone going to the information session on 12<sup>th</sup> April 2021 and look at how if possible there are ways to try and make sure the services are as successful as possible.

Shauna advised that herself and Adrian would have had conversations about individual referrals into their services looking specifically for counselling and through discussion realise that actually therapeutic support or a different type of support that might be needed and stated that it has been useful to talk those referrals through with Adrian and then try and explain to people that there is a difference. Adrian agreed and advised that Koram get a lot of referrals where there is high anxiety with a child who may be on a waiting list for an Autism diagnosis and advised that one of the Clinical Coordinators who has experience in that area and with the CAMHS team has advised that the traditional therapeutic and coping strategies are not appropriate for a child on the spectrum because the underlying route of the anxiety is their autism so need specialist support.

Adrian stated that Koram offer support under some of their Department for Communities (DFC) funding and advised that they have an application in for Children in Need for further funding and recently received National Lottery for the Koram Wellbeing project which is

further funding for children and young people services as well for both talking therapies and art therapy.

Riognach explained that she received a call recently from a Principal looking for counselling services and queried with Adrian if he would be happy for Shauna to signpost that to him. Sharon advised that Barnardo's used to provide a school based counselling service but was unsure if they still did that. Riognach advised that Barnardo's offered 'time for me' which is very affective. Sharon queried if they could get funding through MACEs as one of the interventions.

Claire advised that she applied for funding through the Irish Society for counsellors post Covid and got awarded some funding. Claire confirmed that they have two Counsellors that come into Holy Cross and provide counselling which over lockdown has been happening via zoom and telephone. Funding from the Irish Society was for either devices or counselling and she received the full amount.

Mary advised that Rapid also have their own child budget so if anyone had schools in the rural areas to give her a call.

Donna advised that MACE are trying to establish a dynamic panel arrangement so if the Western Trust were trying to create a sustainable framework. If services in the Strabane area comes together and develop something that works really well, hopefully their services will continue to be on the list of the Western Trust providers and address the gaps are and spoke on different needs emerging all the time and advised that it was a good opportunity to work together and noted that if she could she was happy to support.

A discussion followed about smaller organisations capacity and logistics and that joined up delivery could mitigate these.

Adrian advised that they have a recent addition to their clinical team who has an Art Psychotherapist background and has experience in working with Autism.

Sharon advised that from Easter Sure Start were going to be offering a service by a counselling student who would be based in Unit 21 Orchard Road Industrial Estate and will be available on Tuesdays, she will be providing four hours per week and that will be for 4 people and from September she will be offering six sessions a week. Sharon advised the

counselling will be for low level issues like low mood and anxiety. She noted that this was available for people outside the Sure Start catchment area.

**Action: Sharon to circulate information on service.**

Sharon advised that Sure Start services will hopefully start after Easter but there was no definite date yet. Rioghnach advised that there was a Covid secure approach.

Ivan noted that there was some degree of confusion among parents as nursery schools have already reopened. Sharon advised that they have been keeping parents who have children at the two year old programme updated and telling them as soon as they know more

### **Any Other Business -**

Rioghnach advised that it was beneficial having discussions around services, what we need and if we can work together because that is the kind of conversation needed. Engagement and interaction is key.

Una advised that she was contacted by Gillian from Gamcare which is an organisation that provides awareness raising on the impact of gambling. Una advised that she was hoping to organise a suite of training across the region for locality group members. Una advised that there has been reports of increased gambling and gaming over lockdown.

Rioghnach advised that Donna and Sharon are leading on a Coersive Control training event. She encouraged members to contact Una or herself if they have training or an issue that they would like included in the agenda.

Donna explained that she was involved in project in Donegal which she used to do where she worked in Dublin and was unsure if there was something similar, they are looking at CISM Training (Critical Incident Stress Management) which is based on a critical incident that has happened and give an example in Donegal where there was a cluster of suicides and explained that a Critical Incident Debrief supports the staff and it also supports the other people affected by the incident. Donna

advised that with Covid and the impact it may be something to look at.

Una advised that she wasn't familiar with anything in the Western Trust area but in Belfast Community Organisations would have something similar. Rose advised that Education Authority has a Critical Incident Team that goes to schools when there is an incident.

Una advised that the Western Area Outcomes Group had some slippage funding that has been committed to period poverty. The funding panel have agreed that the smoothest way to do it was through Locality Planning Groups. Funding will go to the LPG Chair's organisations to buy products in bulk. Members in Strabane can then approach Barnardo's and to get products to have available for any girls. Rioghnach advised that in Strabane products will be in either Sure Start or the Family Centre so if the services wanted to avail they can pick products up.

Mary queried if there were any flyers or more information available as she worked very closely with the access to food campaign in the Sperrin and Derg areas and believed that someone in the rural locations could avail of the products. Mary queried if there was a remit catchment for this service and Una advised that it was the whole of the Strabane Locality area. Una advised that Peter Weir has committed to making sanitary products free in schools from September 2021.

**Action: Una to create flyer/information on Period Poverty**

Rioghnach advised that the next meeting will take place on 27 May 2021 and will have the same structure and they hoped to have a speaker attend on something topical.

### **E-zine articles, FYIs**

Chair reminded members to send any flyers or information they would like shared with other members to Una.

If members have any information they would like to include in the Regional E-Zine to send to Una.

### **Future Meetings**

All meetings will be held at 10am on:

Thursday 27 May

Thursday 26 August

Thursday 24 June

Thursday 28 October