

## Locality Planning Groups – September 2022- February 2023

### Early intervention support for children with disabilities and their families

#### **Achievements: -**

#### **Belfast LPGs**

- West Belfast LPG identified the need to build capacity within organisations and practitioners to support children and young people with disabilities. West Belfast GP Federation agreed to fund three tailored workshops accommodating 15 practitioners per session. focus on having an environment that supports Autistic workers and young people, what is autism, etc.
- East Belfast LPG raised the lack of support services for families who have a child with ASD or awaiting assessment, therefore the Carew Centre accessed funding to address the gap. Including a parent/carer peer support group 'In Touch with Autism Meet Ups' which was delivered by UHUB. Parents/Carers were able to attend the meet ups, to meet other parents who have children with Autism and get advice and support from experts. There were 8 sessions delivered through this funding and feedback was positive.

#### **Northern Area LPGs**

- Larne and Carrickfergus LPG engaged with Peace Plus Plan for the Mid & East Antrim Area
- Information shared on support or activities for people with disabilities and/or additional needs was sent to all members.
- Newtownabbey LPG Hill Croft shared information about their Play Dates on Tuesday afternoons from 2-3.30pm for all children aged 0-6 with a learning disability and their parents/carers.
- Causeway LPG funding of £400 was supplied to 4 projects Mae Murray Foundation – 'All Ability' Christmas Event for Children with Disabilities over 300 attended.

#### **South Eastern LPGs**

#### **(Ards and North Down LPG and Down LPG)**

- Plan to develop Social Cafes for families with additional needs requiring early help.

**(Colin LPG)**

- Working with partners in Dublin and Dundalk, Colin Early Intervention is currently developing an ambitious Emotional Support Pathway project proposal, to support families whose child has a neurodevelopmental condition (primarily ASD and ADHD). We are now actively working to secure funding to deliver this programme

**Southern LPGs**

- Continued work with the Our Journey Through Disability Group: interagency co-production with parents of a child with a disability. Nearing completion of information pack for families including self care, signposting to local services and resources, information and advice.

**Western LPGs**

**(Northern Sector LPGs)**

- Development of ASD Social Café Events in each locality area in the West. Derry/Strabane/Limavady/Waterside/Omagh/Fermanagh.
- Development of database of ASD services within local community to support Children, Young People and their Parents.
- Successful recruitment through the WAOG of two additional staff within Autism NI to support young people and parents.
- Bringing together a spectrum of community-based organisation and developing dialogue and understanding among parents and professionals.

**(Southern Sector LPGs)**

- Increasing Autism support LPGs, Health Improvement & Autism Early Intervention Team mapping supports/ organisations / groups and have organised 6 Autism Social Cafés across the Trust for families to attend who have received a diagnosis, are waiting or believe their child may have a neurodiversity condition. Cafés are an opportunity to meet all those who can support the family in the look area and participate in workshops facilitated by local practitioners on key issues

**Challenges: -**

**Belfast LPGs**

- continues to be high levels of families seeking support for their children who have a diagnosis of ASD or ADHD or who are waiting for assessment. Waiting lists ASD/ADHD specific supports are very high and in recent months some organisations funded through the BAOG have closed their waiting lists.

### **Northern Area LPGs**

Members expressing concerns about

- Long waiting lists for CAMHS or counselling
- Lack of in home ASD/ADHD Support
- Lack of play therapy
- Lack of counselling services
- Lack of peer support for parents with children with learning disabilities
- Family Support is particularly lacking in the Newtownabbey area. The group feels an Early Intervention Support Service (EISS) is required in the Newtownabbey area.

### **South Eastern LPGs**

#### **(Ards and North Down LPG and Down LPG)**

- Waiting for SEAOG to meet

#### **(Colin LPG)**

- Funding uncertainties increased by political instability mean that even project proposals that everyone agrees would make a huge difference to growing backlogs are finding it hard to identify a funding mechanism.

### **Southern LPGs**

- Lack activities highlighted by all LPG's for children with a disability and/or complex needs. Lack of activities for children with autism and their siblings. Long waiting lists for ASD & ADHD assessments with no interim support available (raised by Family Support Hubs).

### **Western LPGs**

#### **(Northern Sector LPGs)**

- Maintaining traction regarding the issue of pre-diagnosed young people with ASD. Members are highlighting this as an area the challenges their capacity.
- Widening out this response to incorporate a more holistic view of neuro diverse children and young people.

#### **(Southern Sector LPGs)**

- Dependant on local community groups or Councils to provide funding for venue and refreshments so continuation of Cafes in question.

## Improve outcomes for Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing needs of children and families

### **Achievements: -**

#### **Belfast LPGs**

- In response to the lack of therapeutic and counselling services in East Belfast a sub-group was created to look at this issue in more detail it gave members the opportunity to identify services available and gaps. Due to the closure of East Belfast Community Counselling and the long waiting lists for AMH a gap was identified for therapeutic services for children and young people. Uhub have now providing adult counselling at present from this venue. Uhub have been providing some small group support for children with support from the Carew Centre to address the gap. There continues to be need for these services within the community and the LPG will continue to raise this.
- Presentation from Action Mental Health's Regional Menssana Team to the four Belfast LPGs took place in November 22. This service focus' on children, young people and adults in an early intervention approach and delivers a range of educational and training programmes to children and young people across the province.
- East Belfast LPG are hosting a Cost of Living and Wellbeing Café on 23.2.23 with the aim of supporting families in accessing local services to get help with the ongoing cost of living crisis and help for their own and their children's emotional health and wellbeing. There are a number of workshops, demonstrations and information tables planned for the event to give families a taster of the types of services available

#### **Northern Area LPGs**

- Mid Ulster - A Can we talk? conference was organised jointly with Dungannon Locality Group on 25 October 2022. 93 people, 26 information stalls present. NI Children & Young People's Commissioner Koulla Yiasouma was the keynote speaker. Video produced
- 30 organisations benefited from 835 Christmas art booklets across Mid Ulster to increase awareness of the 5 steps to well-being.
- Carrickfergus Youth Fair took place on 1 February in Oakfield Community Development Centre to increase the YP awareness of local organisations/services available to them. Over 300 Year 10 pupils from 2 local post-primary schools attended. 15 organisations shared information.
- Presentation from Start360 gave overview of their services available to Young People
- Causeway LPG £400 project activity funds provided opportunities to Rasharkin Primary School – 'Active Playtimes,' which encourages more active playtimes through new play equipment and Ballymoney High

School 'Thoughtful Thursday' Mental Health project which helps year 8's transition into First Year

- Young People's Mental Health Survey carried out online

### **South Eastern LPGs**

#### **(Ards and North Down LPG and Down LPG)**

- calendar of events to celebrate Childrens Mental Health Week 6-12 February 2023
- Childrens Mental Health Week Celebration Screensaver on SEHSCT 6-12 Feb.
- New Roots of Empathy instructors recruited and trained in partnership with other LPG members.
- Plan to deliver Solihull Approach training to Early Intervention services March 2023

#### **(Colin LPG)**

- Increased provision of Colin primary schools-based one-to-one counselling, from 54 to 66 children for the 2022-23 school year, was secured through additional funding.

### **Southern LPGs**

- Can We Talk event – event on 25 October in Cookstown for 93 practitioners and teachers. Raising awareness of EWB and MH issues for children and young people in the Mid Ulster area, and showcasing work and support in the area for all age groups (including Youth Wellness Web). 23 information stands and local resource produced for reference. Joint work between Dungannon and Mid Ulster LPG's. Score card [HERE](#)

### **Western LPGs**

#### **(Northern Sector LPGs)**

- Promoting local community-based initiatives that provide mental health and emotional wellbeing support for families within an early intervention context. A key example is the BBHF Give and Take Programme. Creating links with Gateway Service.
- Members have a range of services available across the localities supporting mental health and well-being and adopting the core model of "take five" approach. One recent site visit to Lincoln Courts Community Group demonstrated the innovative work supporting young people emotional well-being.

- Mentor provision in local community settings providing 1:1 relationship-based programmes for young people on the periphery of mainstream service provision.

**(Southern Sector LPGs)**

- 12 Community Youth Workers (WAOG Funding) provided with a raft of wellbeing and mental health training filling an identified gap. NEXUS NI have provided – supporting young people disclose domestic and sexual abuse and will be providing Level 1 CSE awareness raising including models/types, warning signs/vulnerability to CSE, grooming, online, effects, reporting, legal context and self-care. There will also be the opportunity to complete level 2. Participants have begun co-designing a programme with their young people utilising aspects of the information from the training.

**Challenges: -**

**Northern Area LPGs**

Lack of counselling services

- Support for mental health is in high demand. FSH funded counselling has now ended and won't be renewed therefore leaving a significant gap due to very limited services of this nature across the entire NHSCT area.
- Lack of translation services across the Northern Trust.
- Long waiting list for CAMHS, ASD and STEP
- Family Support is particularly lacking in the Newtownabbey area. The group feels an Early Intervention Support Service (EISS) is required in the Newtownabbey area.
- Long waiting lists for CAMHS or counselling
- Lack of in home ASD Support
- Lack of in-home parenting/family support
- Lack of children's counselling services support
- Waiting lists for services for FSH to refer in to also CAMHs and ASD service

**South Eastern LPGs**

**(Colin LPG)**

- The continuing impact of Covid on children's social and educational development has still not been fully assessed and worked through.

**Southern LPGs**

- Difficult to engage with schools to raise awareness of local resources – trying to address but they do not recognise CYPSP.

**Western LPGs**

**(Northern Sector LPGs)**

- Funding remains a constant challenge for these community- based provisions. This has been compounded by the cost of living crisis and a perception of a lack of political/departmental will toward sustainability.

**(Southern Sector LPGs)**

- Long waiting lists for local face to face mental health intervention

## **Support children whose wellbeing is being affected by disruption\* to their schooling**

### **Achievements: -**

#### **Belfast LPGs**

- Presentation from Principal of Currie Primary school in North Belfast on their new multi-functional family unit within the school grounds. The facilities include a family sensory room, a parent coordinator office, a parent's room, a multi-use room, a kitchen for cookery classes, The Pantry food bank, and a school library for parents and children to borrow together. LPG members were invited to use the facilities

#### **South Eastern LPGs**

##### **(Ards and North Down LPG and Down LPG)**

- Delivered Take 5 to P7s in the Bee Safe campaign, Down Primary Schools in partnership with other public services

##### **(Colin LPG)**

- One of the Colin primary schools has been providing free morning breaks for every pupil since before the Halloween break.

#### **Southern LPGs**

- Promoting local evidence-based parenting programmes offered through SHSCT, ParentLine NI, Parenting NI and CAWT MACE programme via our fortnightly E-bulletin FYI and at LPG meetings.

#### **Western LPGs**

##### **(Northern Sector LPGs)**

- Recent success in highlighting the issue of children and young people on reduced timetables within the WAOG agenda.
- Relationship with local EWO service is working collaboratively within the Locality Planning Process to explore ways to support children where their school time is disrupted, remains positive in all localities.
- Local parenting programmes along with regional provision support parents to manage behaviour and develop strategies to support children's wellbeing, particularly if school is disrupted. Shantallow Family Centre's Parent Support for Teenagers being a good practice example in this instance.
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**(Southern Sector LPGs)**

- Ongoing mapping of local supports services / interventions or models offered in primary and post primary schools. Once gathered working groups will be set up to test the mapped findings made up from LPG members (Hubs, EA, Youth Service) to identify geographical areas where supports are not available, examples of good practice which can be shared and evidence for local future planning.

**Challenges: -**

**Belfast LPGs**

- Red Cross presented to the South Belfast LPG on Asylum seeking families including: It currently taking 8-9 months for children to get a place in schools. Until recently Mears were referring to the Intercultural Education Service (linked through EA) where they would discuss educational needs and issue families with school age children devices or laptops so they could remotely access education. However, two of the key staff of this scheme have since moved on and there is some uncertainty about replacements.
- A Welcome Club had been established in a local primary school. This is not a school per se but an educational bridge where children attend for half a day. A similar post-primary club is being delivered in an East Belfast High School. With no transport being provided to these schools, families are struggling to get there. At present the Intercultural Education Service and EA are looking into the issue. there needs to be a clear pathway in place go through the school registration process.
- concerns about children and young people's school refusal, ongoing issue within Belfast for a number of years including nursery school age.
- Further support is needed to address school refusal with particular need for emotional health and wellbeing support for children, young people and their parents

**Northern Area LPGs**

- Mid Ulster - Lack of counselling services

**South Eastern LPGs**

**(Colin LPG)**

- Securing funding to keep these free breaks for every pupil going until the end of the academic year will be a big challenge.

**Southern LPGs**

- Non-attendance of EWO's at LPG meetings due to work-to-rule practice, so unable to get a full report of the extent and causes of the issues.

## **Western LPGs**

### **(Northern Sector LPGs)**

- Issue with providing support for children and young people who are on reduced timetables within the parameters of EA requirements.
- Younger children pre 2<sup>nd</sup> level education, where school disruption is a factor. A lack of a consistent approach to service provision.
- Service waiting lists, particularly with EOTAS
- Compound effect on children who are also looked after and concomitant pressure this can place on foster/care placements and permanency.

### **(Southern Sector LPGs)**

- Transport concern for young people (highlighted at Youth Voice Consultation) as they cannot stay in larger towns were they attend schools for leisure activities and sports with taxis unaffordable

**Contribution to strategic cross Departmental actions in response to poverty, as well as locality-based service responses**

**Achievements: -**

**Belfast LPGs**

- Meeting with the 10 Belfast FSHs to discuss the current challenges facing families in regards to the Cost of Living Crisis. Topics covered included:
  - i) Information on available practical support
  - ii) What is support/funding is expected to be available
  - iii) Current Hub pressures
  - iv) Gaps in services
  - v) Hub experiences on delivering practical support
  - vi) How families can be best connected to resources - A paper was produced following this meeting and shared with the BAOG and LPG members.
- East Belfast Locality Planning Group are hosting a Cost of Living and Wellbeing Café on 23 February 23. There will be a number of organisations participating with a focus on providing local families with advice and support on services they can access within their community.
- BAOG allocated £2000 to each FSH to enable them to provide practical supports to local families

**Northern Area LPGs**

- Mid-Ulster LPG - Working in partnership with CWSAN, £6000 funding secured from the Northern Healthy Lifestyles Partnership 'Choose to Live Better' Funding to deliver healthy eating and slow cooker programmes to children and parents. To address families were struggling to provide nutritious meals.
- Larne/Carrick LPG – Guest speaker from MEACAS gave an overview of their service – benefit checks, advice, Save the Children Fund
- Newtownabbey LPG members are working with people/families that are currently experiencing financial hardship. The group purchased 40 x £50 vouchers for Tesco. 10 organisations received vouchers at the beginning of February to give to their clients experiencing financial hardship. OBA to follow.
- Newtownabbey LPG - guest from Christian's Against Poverty gave an overview of the services available in the Newtownabbey area including debt counselling, job club and life skills courses, Baby Basic's and food table outside St Johns Presbyterian Church
- Newtownabbey LPG - guest speaker from Community Advice Antrim & Newtownabbey made members aware that they can provide help and advice with issues around cost of living, benefit entitlements, problems/reviews/appeals. Including overview of the Save the Children fund and Social Supermarkets.

- Across all LPGs in Northern Area Save the Children Family Support Programme (partnership with councils, NHSCT, SHSCT and Community Advice)
- Initiative running in all LPG areas (Oct 22- Sept 23) supporting families struggling financially with at least 1 child under 6 years.
- Oct 2022- Feb 23 - 189 family applications have been submitted providing support to 389 children.

### **South Eastern LPGs (Ards and North Down LPG and Down LPG)**

- Distributed the CYPSP cost of living tool across LPG members
- November & January Ards & North Down LPG Poverty forum has met, distribution of local resources, family fun day planned for March 2023

### **(Colin LPG)**

- Colin provided support to 58 local families who couldn't afford to provide Christmas gifts/toys, to ensure that Santa visited their homes on Christmas Eve.

This involved 373 gifts for 152 children.

2 families received £30 ASDA Vouchers.

6 families received £30 meat vouchers.

15 families received £50 vouchers for the local supermarket.

Over 700 households in the Colin area received the BCC £100 Energy Hardship Vouchers, these were distributed by Colin Neighbourhood Partnership and Poleglass Community Association.

- We now have a representative from the Jobs & Benefits Office based in Cloona House every Wednesday, to provide information and support to those who require help with benefits etc.

### **Southern LPGs**

- Meetings with 3 Councils Community Planning Officers to share work and avoiding duplication.
- Promoting CYPSP Cost of Living Resource to all members and through FYI.
- Slight amendments being made to School Uniform Recycling Toolkit so it can be rolled out across the Southern area – practical resource for schools to use as guidance in hosting a school uniform recycling initiative.

## **Western LPGs**

### **(Northern Sector LPGs)**

- Connection with local Council in relation to their poverty strategy.
- Involvement in task and finish groups with a view to a greater collective understanding on how the cost of living crisis has on family life and development.
- Cost of living crisis now a standing item on the Locality planning meetings.
- Providing information on the range of supports available to families.
- Involvement in local early intervention work stream, which will include a poverty framework.
- Involvement in local based responses such as Save the Children family support fund over Christmas supporting families in stress and supporting children's play and development within the family

### **(Southern Sector LPGs)**

- Roll out of locally codesigned "health promoting families project" funded by WAOG involving 24 women. Fermanagh and Omagh DC donated slow cookers and kitchen equipment to participants of project. Additional funding from local Women's Aid and Empowering Newcomers.

## **Challenges: -**

### **Northern Area LPGs**

- On-going challenges highlighted in all areas to keep up with continued rise of cost of living for everyone, not just those on benefits.

### **South Eastern LPGs**

- Ards and North Down LPG hasn't regrouped since pandemic due to reduced capacity.

### **(Colin LPG)**

- Unfortunately, many Colin families missed out on the £100 vouchers from Belfast City Council as only 700 were allocated for the entire area.
- It is unlikely that this type of support will be repeated, but we will continue to lobby for financial and other support for struggling families.

### **Southern LPGs**

- No long-term strategies or resources in place to offer sustained and practical assistance for families.
- Practitioners also facing challenges financially in their own families

## **Western LPGs**

### **(Northern Sector LPGs)**

- The pervasiveness of poverty within localities can feel overwhelming to service providers. The vicarious trauma of hearing the struggles of families and young people can present challenges to staff working directly in this environment.
- The challenge of maintaining service levels in the face of cost of living crisis. Some members reporting on difficulty between maintenance costs and staffing costs.
- Issues regarding these challenges have been consistently escalated, however, a perception that “nothing seems to change” has an impact on motivation, particularly in these challenging times. This, in turn can become a negative theme within the locality planning process.

### **(Southern Sector LPGs)**

- Cost and availability of childcare, cost of attending medical / social care appointments in main towns when residing in rural areas.