

REPORT TO: Children, Young People & Families Policy & Performance Board

DATE: 11 November 2019

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, People

PORTFOLIO: Children, Education & Social Care

SUBJECT: Early Outcome Fund (EOF)

WARD(S) Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The report aims to outline the progress regarding Halton's successful bid in receiving a part share of the Early Outcomes Fund. It summarises the context of the bid, the evidence of progress towards project aims and highlights some of the challenges.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

1. **Members support the drive of the TALK Halton project to improve children's speech, language and communication skills as a core priority; and**
2. **Members ask for further update report on the progress of the project at the February 2020.**

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 The TALK Halton project came into being as a result of a successful bid to the DfE as part of the Early Outcomes fund in January 2019.

Money from the DfE is awarded through the Early Outcomes Fund to:

- Halve the proportion of children not reaching expected levels in Communication Language and Literacy in reception by 2028
- Closing the 'word gap' in areas of social disadvantage
- Ensuring children who experience disadvantage are given the support they need to succeed

This report provides an update of the progress of the TALK Halton project presented to the PPB, report dated 10th June 2019.

3.2 TALK Halton aims to increase awareness of the importance of communication development in the Early Years and support good outcomes for children by improving their communication skills. This will be addressed through 3 main strands of the TALK Halton project:

Strategic Development

- Communication pathway - joined up doing
- Communication strategy - joined up thinking
- DATA collection and use - joined up knowledge

Workforce Development

- Training Needs Analysis (TNA) and Skills Audit – of the whole children’s workforce.
- Practitioner training developed from the TNA
- Provision of Resources to support good communication practice and communication friendly environments.

Identification of Children

- Identify and support children quickly using common assessment Tool - **WellComm Toolkit**.
- Know and understand the actual prevalence of SLCN in Halton to inform appropriate commissioning and workforce planning.
- Reduce the numbers of children being referred to specialist SLT services inappropriately.
- Marketing key communication messages to people who have a key caring or education role with children.

4.0 SUMMARY OF PROGRESS:

4.1 Recruitment to the TALK Halton Team

Project recruitment plan is almost complete:

To recruit:	Progress	Comments
X1 Project Lead	In Post July 2019 part time – full time by Oct 19	Secoded post
X1 Early Years Foundation Stage Teacher	Still in recruitment	Post has been advertised several times
X2 Early Years Teaching Assistants	In post Sept 19	X2 have been employed a third is under recruitment due to underspend on teacher post. X2 have qualified teacher status.
X4 Speech and Language Therapists	X1.4 in post July- Sept	Recruitment through core ChatterBug

	2019	SLT commissioned service
X1 Health Visitor	In post mid Sept 19	Secondment
2 Adult Learning Co-ordinators	In post April – Sept 2019	X3 part time staff in post
Project Co-ordinator	In post Sept 2019	

The project is driven by a dedicated, project lead to ensure sufficient capacity to achieve successful outcomes. The project lead is in post on secondment from the locally commissioned Speech and Language Therapy (SLT) ChatterBug service. The secondment will give the opportunity to support full integration of the project aims into the core SLT service post project as part of the exit strategy.

The Health Visitor post is also a secondment from the commissioned 0-19 team. These roles will ensure sustainable system and culture change within their own organisations and at an operational level with all front-line practitioners.

Recruitment of the project team has been delayed. This delay has been caused by two main factors. Firstly, the fact that we were unable to advertise posts until the DfE had released a press statement mid-April and, secondly, due to the complexities of the HR processes within the Council. However, we are now nearing the completion of the recruitment process, with most staff in post from the start of September

There remain challenges with recruitment of SLT's and an EYFS teacher. There is a shortage of available Speech and Language Therapists in the North West at this time. The teacher post has now been re-advertised as a potential job share. This has been included in the project Risk Register alongside measures to mitigate the risks.

4.2 Strategy

A Strategic Task and finish group is established and operational. This group has three main roles:-

- To develop the strategy that will underpin TALK Halton and engages all partners;
- To devise an action plan. This action plan will set out a common pathway to create a blueprint for how future assessment and intervention services work together across all early years providers;
- To review the strategy and action plan at agreed intervals.

3 sub-groups with appropriate membership have been established to address specific project outcomes, these sub groups report into the Strategic Task and Finish group. These are:

- Communication Pathway and Strategy Sub Group
- Marketing Sub Group
- Data and Evaluation Sub Group

The Strategic Board has been established, incorporated into the One Halton Steering Group, and is on track. The Board has been provided with an overview of it's roles and responsibilities with regards to the TALK Halton Project and appropriate representation has been made. This group has met twice so far.

Potential parent representatives for Task and Finish group have been identified.

4.3 Workforce Planning and Culture

Objective	Progress	Comments
All Early Years settings to engage with the project and nominate a TALK Halton Lead	<p>65 out of 69 settings in the local Authority have signed up to take part in the project.</p> <p>2 settings have declined to take part – one of these already uses the Wellcomm pack and has Elklan Communication Friendly status.</p> <p>2 settings are being followed up by the project team with the view to engagement.</p>	Engagement is on-going across the entire children's workforce.
The Wellcomm Toolkit will be used by all partners to screen every child in Halton and will form the basis of our information and data sets, and will inform our strategic direction	<p>63 of the settings that have signed up have received initial Wellcomm training and Toolkits. Settings have commenced screening.</p> <p>Wellcomm training has taken place for other partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children's Centre 	2 EY settings have not been able to attend training sessions and will be supported in their setting by the project team.

	<p>workforce</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portage • Childminders 	
<p>To carry out a skills audit across all early years' service providers in order to produce a gap analysis to inform the delivery plan and meet the requirements of the strategy.</p>	<p>A Training Needs Analysis has been devised and circulated to EY settings.</p>	<p>The TNA will be shared across the entire children's workforce over this term.</p> <p>This will inform the creation of and delivery of future dedicated training packages.</p>
<p>Parents whose children are not in formal childcare can access the system through Children Centre groups and outreach.</p>	<p>Discussions with Children's Centre Leads has resulted in TALK Halton being incorporated into group activities.</p> <p>All Children's Centre staff received training around Speech, Language and Communication/Language and Literacy and WellComm pack training Sept 2019. Children's Centre Workforce have been trained to use Wellcomm toolkit and are embedding into practice.</p>	<p>Children's centre action plan in place to support project aims and on going sustainability of TALK Halton post project, supporting children's communication has now been identified as a core objective for all children's centre practitioners.</p>
<p>To establish links with 'BestStartInLife' and ensure coherence with other assessments, such as ASQ, and interventions used in Halton</p>	<p>All Health visitors have received Speech, Language and Communication Training, through 'Beststartinlife' initiative – TALK Halton project lead supported training programme.</p> <p>Project Health Visitor is supporting the integration of EY assessments with Health and EY education.</p>	<p>Wellcomm training has been identified as a training need for this staff cohort. This will take place December 2019</p>

<p>To develop and enhance a collaborative two-year old integrated review and partnership care planning</p>	<p>TALK Halton HV is actively working with Health and LA partners around the integrated two year old reviews and partnership care planning.</p>	<p>Work action plan in place for HV role</p>
<p>To deliver the SLCN components of the universal ante-natal and 'readiness for school' programmes to highlight the importance of communication, speech and language across all ages.</p>	<p>TALK Halton have contributed key communication information re: Local Authority 'Ready for School' cascade training and information booklet.</p> <p>Project Health Visitor has attended ante natal and post-natal groups to establish a baseline of information to build on.</p>	<p>Work action plan in place for HV role to move this forward.</p>
<p>To involve Midwifery in the project through training, representation on working groups and Health promotions.</p>	<p>Project HV has made contact with Midwifery service.</p> <p>Midwifery representative has been invited to Task and Finish Group.</p>	
<p>To provide support for operational staff during the process of culture change.</p>	<p>TALK Halton Cluster workshops have taken place and are now established. These enable practitioners to share practice and problem solve issues with support from the project team. The aim is to move to self-sustainability in the future.</p>	<p>All of the settings that attended Q1 training have also had a follow up support visit/s by the EY practitioners and SLT. All have started to use the Wellcomm Toolkit successfully</p>
<p>Adult and Family Learning practitioners will provide a range of</p>	<p>TALK Halton Adult and Family Learning groups commenced April 2019. A new programme is</p>	<p>Early Years settings identified to provide adult learning opportunities for</p>

workshops, training courses and extension activities to support effective and sustainable family and community engagement in the Project	operational for Autumn term 2019.	parents of EY children in settings in addition to programme delivered in Children's Centres. This will allow more parents to access the project.
Childminders to engage with project and identify how Wellcomm screening can be integrated into daily practice.	Childminders have been successfully engaged with the project and have started to review how they can successfully utilise the Toolkit.	Childminder training has been booked to follow up discussions Nov 2019.
To create and implement a Marketing Strategy which will promote the project objective of raising awareness of the importance of communication with all key stakeholders (including parents carers)	<p>Liaison with Michelle Osborne's team has taken place.</p> <p>Marketing plan has been devised.</p> <p>Marketing strategy sub group is operational.</p> <p>Project logo has been agreed.</p>	

4.4 Information and Data

- We are establishing a user friendly, common information sharing system across partners with a central reporting point. This will ensure robust, borough wide, monitoring and evaluation of children's early language needs and provide a mechanism by which the effectiveness of assessments and interventions can be measured.
- We aim to use this information sharing system to identify emerging trends. This will enable Halton to put in place effective prevention and early intervention;
- We have determined 3 specific points at which all children will be screened, in addition to those already mandated from the Healthy

Child Programme.

- There are a number of challenges being addressed re: complexities of mass collection data collection from the Wellcomm assessments. The local authority IT team are fully supporting the project to integrate data collection into existing database systems – however the timing of this work is dictated by the capacity of this team – not the project timescale.

5.0 EVALUATION – SUSTAINABILITY

- 5.1 This funding has allowed us to appoint staff to embed and implement new systems and processes. After the funding has ended the roles of the staff will be undertaken by SALT services, Education and Health. The capacity to undertake this will be achieved by a reduction in the current high level of inappropriate referrals to SALT and the upskilling of the early years workforce, enabling children’s early language difficulties to be identified and addressed at a universal level.
- 5.2 The Wellcomm Toolkit builds on our total communication approach and provides a sustainable resource for the future.

6.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 None identified

7.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Project will be funded by a grant awarded by the DfE through the Early Outcomes Fund.

8.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL’S PRIORITIES

8.1 Children & Young People in Halton

Raising children’s achievement in Communication, Language and Literacy impacts on their long-term outcomes, including career opportunities and mental health and will improve outcomes for the more vulnerable children and young people in the borough.

8.2 Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton

Greater confidence in speaking and listening, together with improved communication skills will increase the Education, training and employment opportunities for pupils and students.

8.3 A Healthy Halton

A total communication approach will have a positive impact on the emotional health and wellbeing of challenging pupils and students.

8.4 **A Safer Halton**

None identified.

8.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

None identified

9.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

9.1 Improved communication and language skills within early years settings should reduce incidents of challenging behaviour.

10.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

10.1 The screening of all children around the development of speech and language will ensure that they are able to receive timely support and intervention, thereby reducing inequalities in their life chances.

11.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Early Outcomes Fund Guidance – November 2018	DfE Website	Operational Director – Education Inclusion and Provision & Operational Director Resources
Unlocking Talent, Fulfilling Potential: a plan for improving social mobility through education – December 2017	www.gov.uk	Operational Director – Education Inclusion and Provision & Operational Director Resources
The Bercow Review (2018)	www.bercow10yearson.com	Operational Director – Education Inclusion and Provision & Operational Director Resources