
WILTSHIRE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES VOLUNTARY SECTOR FORUM

June 2015 – June 2017



JUNE 1, 2017

WESSEX COMMUNITY ACTION

UNIT 6, PAXTON BUSINESS CENTRE WHITTLE ROAD CHURCHFIELDS SALISBURY WILTS SP2 7YR

Background

The Wiltshire Children and Families Voluntary Sector Forum works across Wiltshire to bring together voluntary organisations offering services for Children and Families. Bi-monthly meetings take place where organisations share information and update themselves on any new policies and procedures relating to working with children young people and their families. Organisations also support each other which is particularly important in the current economic climate.

The Forum also works closely with the Local Authority to ensure there is a strong relationship and good partnership working between the public sector and voluntary community organisations. Members of the forum attend meetings and workshops held by Wiltshire Children Safeguarding Board and Wiltshire Children and Young People's Trust to ensure that the work of voluntary sector organisations is recognised and organisations can share their knowledge and expertise when services for children and families are being planned. An example of this is where the forum is working with its members and the council to find work placements in voluntary and community agencies for young people who are leaving care.

Since the last available report there have been some major changes: - A new Chair joined the Forum in June 2015 (following a 6-month period without a Chair) and a new Co-ordinator was appointed. Shortly after this the Forum were advised that there was to be a significant reduction in funding from The Children's Trust Board with effect from April 2016. This was seen as an opportunity to consider how the forum might be reshaped to be able to continue delivering a service that members valued whilst also meeting the Service Level Agreement set out by The Children's Trust. A consultation workshop was held with members in April 2016 to consider the reshaping of the Forum. It was agreed that the most cost effective way to continue running the Forum was to replace the Co-ordinator role and appoint a self-employed administrator working directly to the Forum Executives and the Chair. Members voted to retain an independent Chair. Wessex Community Action continue to hold the contract and receive the grant monies from the Council.

Work is progressing well under the new arrangements. The bi-monthly meetings and the monthly newsletter continue and the website has been revamped to make it more user friendly. There has been a focus on sustaining active membership and it is pleasing that attendance at the meetings has greatly improved. The Directory of member's services has been updated and is now available on line and links are also included in key documents and websites for Children's Services in Wiltshire. A major strand of the work has been to support the voluntary sector in practice development. Speakers at the bi monthly meetings have been arranged to enable members to be kept up to date with national and local initiatives. A full analysis of members training needs has been undertaken and a training schedule put in place in response. This has included a programme of training in Data Protection, Domestic Abuse and different levels of Safeguarding.

Work continues in maintaining and improving relationships with partners. In addition to attending meetings held by Children's Trust and Wiltshire Safeguarding Children Board an Early Help event has taken place with practitioners from Wiltshire Council who are responsible for providing Early Help support for families. A further networking event also took place in March 2017 where members were given the opportunity to link with the Councils Community Engagement Managers who work with area boards across Wiltshire.

This report seeks to set out in more detail the work of the Forum during the last 2 years.

1. Membership

One of the initial tasks for the new administration was to undertake an audit of membership. As at January 2016 there were 84 agencies listed in the Directory – however a large number of these organisations did not have any contact with the Forum. With reduced resource in terms of Co-ordinator hours the Executives agreed the Forum should focus now on sustaining and improving the quality of engagement of existing members rather than continuing to canvas for new members.

Engagement was monitored by responses to communication, training information, participation in consultations, input to newsletters and attendance at meetings. It was felt it was important to be able to accurately reflect the numbers of agencies who actively participate in the Forum. It was also not a good use of the Co-ordinators time to be following up and trying to contact those agencies who never seemed to respond. It was also of concern that some agencies listed in the Directory no longer existed or contact details had changed without notifying the Forum to enable correct details to be published in the Directory. After consulting with each agency the audit concluded that a sensible way forward would be to create 2 levels of membership:

1. **Full members** - these are agencies who actively engage with the forum, attend meetings regularly, take up offers of training opportunities, attend networking events, support the Forum by acting as representatives on the Children's Trust Commissioning groups and Safeguarding Children Board at Wiltshire Council. These members receive priority booking on all training courses and their details are published in the Directory and on the website.
2. **Associate members** - these agencies receive all communications but are unlikely to attending meetings. They are listed on the website but full details do not appear as changes are not usually notified to the Forum administrator hence accuracy cannot be guaranteed.

At the time the audit was completed there were 37 full members and 31 Associate members. Since this time the associate member figure has remained static, and another 6 full members have joined making the total 42 active members. (one agency who was a full member had sadly closed). What is particularly pleasing is that since this exercise attendance at meetings has risen to between 50% - 60%. An achievement we are proud of is improving our links with the Army Welfare Service (AWS) – who have signed up as full members and are regularly attending meetings. With the army rebasing programme forging ahead it is important that we continue to develop good relationships with these vital partners.

2 Partnership working with Wiltshire Council

Attendance at WSCB and CTE sub group Meetings: - At the meeting in July 2015 The Chair gave a presentation explaining the structure of the Children's Trust Board (CTE) and the Wiltshire Safeguarding Children Board (WSCB). Members were reminded that the funding enabling the Forum to operate is provided by The Children's Trust Board. The importance of The Forum sending representatives to the sub groups of these boards was reiterated – The Forum has been offered membership of each of these groups to enable the sector to have a voice and be able to input into commissioning conversations at strategic meetings to help inform the planning process. Providing a verbal report to members at the next Forum meeting enables other members to be kept informed about what is happening locally. This was followed by a workshop for members to nominate themselves as representatives and agree informal methods of information sharing with partner agencies outside of Forum meetings. *(see appendix I for details of meetings attended and agencies representing the Forum).*

Organising representatives to attend all of the meetings continues to present a challenge. The Executive felt it was important that in order for a valuable contribution to be made each group should be represented by the agencies who have knowledge and expertise in the area of service delivery. It was felt that creating a generic role for attendance is simply not cost effective – neither is it possible under the reduced funding arrangements and it would not be truly reflective as meaningful engagement by the Voluntary Sector. The wide range of meetings does mean that 100% attendance is not sustainable and especially in small agencies too much of practice leads time can be taken up by attending meetings and producing reports. Difficulties also arise when meetings are cancelled at short notice and dates rearranged – these changes cannot always be accommodated by outside organisations. Attendance however has been monitored and the Forum has maintained an average of 83% attendance at the WSCB and CTE sub group meetings throughout the period within the scope of this report.

Forum Meetings: - Topics for information and discussion at the bi-monthly meetings have been arranged to enable members to be kept up to date with national and local initiatives such as Child Sexual Exploitation and the new online assessment tool, New duties for agencies working with Young Carers and the Neglect Strategy and how this is working in Wiltshire. Close linking with the current agendas of the CTE and WSCB ensures that key messages and changes in policy and procedures are communicated to agencies at the right time. Evidence that the Forum is seen by partners as a good mechanism for communication is the number of professionals requesting to come and speak at the meetings -There are two slots on the agenda at each meeting and these are usually booked several months in advance. *(see appendix ii for a full list of speakers)*

Two Meetings of particular significance were: -

1. **Information on duties of Local Authorities for Care Leavers and the expectation of finding work placements for these vulnerable young people.** Following the meeting several agencies expressed interest in supporting the Authority in this area of work. A further workshop was arranged and the Head of Care, Placements and EDS held a seminar at the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust premises in Devizes to explain the process for setting up work placements. The impact of this was that 7 agencies made an offer to provide opportunities to Care Leavers. Sadly, this offer was not taken up by the Placement Team at this time, however, the Personal Advisers in the Youth Offending Team at Wiltshire Council were keen to pursue this offer for the young people they are working with. This will now be an ongoing arrangement between this team and the Voluntary Organisations and it is a good example of partnership working to ensure better outcomes for Young people in Wiltshire. Note - an overview of the Forum has been included in the Care Leavers Service Directory prepared by The Council. It was pleasing to be included in this publication and is a good opportunity to promote the services of all our members.
2. **Support Services for young people with SEND and the need for work placements leading to employment for Disabled Young People.** Once again agencies were keen to offer support and 3 agencies immediately made contact to offer work placements. This meeting was also very timely for some agencies who were able to re-establish links with Further Education providers. The quote below highlights how some members found this meeting particularly beneficial.

"Through our membership of the Children and Families Voluntary Sector Forum, we have been able to meet with staff at Wiltshire college to discuss work placements at the Scrapstore. It is often easy to loose contacts within a large organisation when staff come and go or are moved around departments, so being able to reconnect through the Forum with such organisations is incredibly useful. We have been able to discuss the kind of work placements we can offer and in turn this has proved beneficial to the college in placing students within a caring environment that can support individuals in gaining valuable skills and experiences which they can take with them into their future working life."

Jane Wheeler, Director, Wiltshire Scrapstore

3. Networking Events

Early Help Event - 27 September 2016 at Devizes Corn Exchange. This event was held to promote greater partnership working between Voluntary Sector Organisations and practitioners working in The Early Help Team at Wiltshire Council. The event was opened by Cllr Laura Mayes – Lead Member for Children’s Services.

Mal Munday Head of Service for Early Help at Wiltshire Council was the keynote speaker. A “Market Place” was arranged and 21 stands were set up by agencies to promote their service. Participants were given plenty of time for networking and to take part in discussions about “How we work better together” and “what we all need to do to make this happen”.

The event was a great success. 48 members of the voluntary sector attended – (representing 29 agencies) and 32 members of staff from the Council’s Early Help Teams and Community Engagement Managers. 87% of participants who responded to the evaluations reported the event to be “good/excellent.”

Participants thought the networking aspect was most useful and comments included: -

“Understanding how we can work better together to benefit the community especially those that are vulnerable” “Linking in with some services I didn’t know about and how to access them.”

Responses to “How will attending this event influence your practice?” included: -

“Network more, promote information and use of directory amongst colleagues, Use connections made today, Contact other organisations for support and referrals. Met organisations who we will now work in partnership, more knowledge about where to access services for clients and their children, Lots more signposting of CFVSF website and directory. Champion Voluntary Sector in team meetings and promote with front-line staff.”

The wider impact of the event was: -

- One of the Community Engagement Managers offered to attend the bi-monthly Forum meetings and be the point of contact between the Forum and the Team of Community Engagement Managers (CEM). Planning also commenced for a networking event with all the CEM’s to be held later in the year. (see below)
- Members raised queries about attending Multi-Agency Forums (MAF’s) and information is now on the website for members to contact their local MAF directly to arrange to attend a meeting. It is hoped that schools will be able to find out about and link with agencies to secure additional early help for Families and Young people who need support.
- Good feedback was received regarding the layout of the Directory of Member Services. Agencies have now been categorised according to their service area to make it easier for practitioners to locate the support they require. All Early help officers were made aware of the Directory and given the links to access it on-line.
- The number of hits on the CFVSF website have been monitored and are showing an increase since this event. It is hoped that this is evidence of the site being used by practitioners to access support for families.

- Arrangements were made for a Senior Commissioning Officer to attend a Forum meeting to talk to members about the Digital Assessment & Referral Tool (DART). Following this meeting a link to the Directory of member services is being included within the Tool.

Networking event with Community Engagement Officers – 29th March at Wiltshire Council County Hall

Community Engagement Managers are important partners for the voluntary sector and this event was held to provide members with an opportunity to meet their local Managers and let them know about the services they can provide in the area. The event was held in The Dining Room at County Hall and was attended by 29 members of the Forum, 15 Community Engagement Managers and Bunty the 9 month old Chippenham Engagement Guide dog puppy (who behaved impeccably and there are no doubts she will progress to be a wonderful Guide dog in a few years' time). This event was well received and everyone who attended took the time to come and say how useful it had been in terms of networking, developing new projects and securing additional funding. There was a unanimous request from Community Engagement Managers and Forum members that we repeat this event annually.

A number of positive discussions were reported as outcomes including the following: -

- **Discussions about setting up a new Youth Club in South Wilts**
- **Developing provision of Counselling Services in Calne**
- **Exploration of a base for Scrapstore in the South of the County**
- **New member recruited from a Youth Club running in the South of the County.**



4. Safeguarding

The Forum has an important role in co-ordinating the Voluntary Sector in Wiltshire to help the Local Authority create a safer more consistent system to protect and Safeguard Children and Young People. The Chair attends the wider WSCB Meetings on behalf of the Forum and has strong links with the Business Manager of the WSCB. Key messages are communicated to the sector via newsletter, speakers at meetings and the website to ensure agencies are informed and can co-operate to ensure the framework of multi-agency arrangements in Wiltshire is effective. The forum firmly upholds that we must work together to protect and safeguard children.

Safeguarding Training

An example of this work is the Forum listening to members who were reporting they were finding it difficult to access some of the Safeguarding training run by the WSCB. They felt due to funding/staffing constraints they were not always able to book on to the courses far enough in advance to secure a place. Initially members were invited to undertake an audit of their safeguarding training needs and after analysis it was evident where the gaps were. Working with the Business Manager of the WSCB an agreement was reached whereby the forum commissioned the relevant training courses directly from the WSCB to enable agencies training needs to be met. The forum appreciated the support of the WSCB trainers in making this happen and a breakdown of courses is highlighted below.

Courses	Numbers of VSF members attending
Basic awareness – 3 courses ran in total	61
Foundation	8
Advanced (2 day)	16

Domestic Abuse Training

A major focus for the WSCB has been Domestic Abuse (DA). The forum was keen to strengthen support for families and in particular the children and young people in the families who are experiencing domestic abuse. The Forum commissioned SPLITZ to deliver Domestic Abuse Awareness Training for members. This was attended by 22 members. The impact of this training was evidenced when the Forum was notified in October 2016 that Wiltshire Council had been selected for a Joint Targeted Area Inspection. This was a sector-wide inspection involving colleagues from multiple agencies and organisations and the focus was on children living with domestic abuse. Agencies were contacted advising of the inspection and The Chair reiterated the importance of sharing with the inspectors the support offered to children and families from within the voluntary and community sector. The timescale for information to be gathered was, as is usual with inspections, very tight and the response from agencies has to be commended. Many agencies were able to submit

data and case studies of their work in supporting children and families who were currently /or have been exposed to domestic abuse. The inspectors also requested to meet with The Chair and several agencies who have a key role in supporting families experiencing DA. The overall report from the Inspectors was good (no grades are given for these inspections) and there is no doubt that the knowledge and the co-operation of agencies played a part in this positive report. The “strong and Committed” partnership between many key agencies including police, probation and health was noted in the report.¹

Conclusion

The Wiltshire Children and Families Voluntary Sector Forum are moving into the next financial year with confidence and enthusiasm. The governance arrangements have been strengthened with 7 members forming an Executive body and wider partnership arrangements are developing well. The focus will remain on key issues for voluntary organisations and we will continue to keep members informed about important messages from the Children’s Trust and Wiltshire Safeguarding Children Board. In the current financial landscape operating within our budget and delivering value for money is a priority.

An area for improvement is sustaining the representation of the Forum at WSCB and CTE meetings. The Executive Body is aware that we need to do more work to clarify the role and expectations of the representatives. We are mindful that we must not allow the cost of attending meetings to divert resources from front line delivery and neither must it occupy a significant amount of time for leading practitioners. Plans are in place to arrange a workshop to try to find an effective model that deals with limitations of time and ensures all organisations are fully committed and understand the importance of this role. We will continue to work to further improve partnerships and strengthen multi-agency working.

Finally, It is pleasing to note in the **Wood Review of the role and functions of Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCB’s page 153²)** undertaken last year that the importance of working with the voluntary sector is highlighted and the contribution made by smaller voluntary organisations is recognised. The following quote from Wood’s report defines for statutory bodies the importance and value of engaging with voluntary organisations. We are lucky in Wiltshire that such a strong relationship exists between agencies and The Council.

1

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/595476/Joint_targeted_are_a_inspection_of_the_multi-agency_response_to_abuse_and_neglect_in_Wiltshire.pdf

2

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/526329/Alan_Wood_review.pdf (page 153)

“In a permissive structure it may be possible to work more closely with the voluntary and community sector to develop more flexible ways of using their expertise. It is very important, however, to be clear that the contribution is not made by national or larger bodies alone. In small, local projects very valuable work is undertaken with small groups of children and young people who face significant risk. Tailored activities in partnership with schools and other community organisations ensure a wide link to early help for families and children and this is an important aspect of the preventative services needed to protect children. The contribution made by the voluntary and community sector will continue to be a very important part of the national and local framework to protect children and we need to think harder about how we can engage them and support the valuable work they do.”

My thanks to a very dedicated Team of Executives, Administrator and committed and supportive members and to Wiltshire Council Children’s Trust for providing the funding to enable the Forum to operate. There can be no doubt that ‘we do better together’ and the strength of this partnership between the Voluntary Sector and the Council will ensure better outcomes for Families Children and Young People Living in Wiltshire.

Amanda Bennett
Chair
Wiltshire Children & Families Voluntary Sector Forum
June 2017

Appendix i

Meetings attended by representatives of the Voluntary Sector Forum

Group	Agency representing Forum
Wiltshire Safeguarding Children Board	Chair: Voluntary Sector Forum
Children's Trust Board Commissioning Executive	Chair: Voluntary Sector Forum Barnardo's
Children's Trust Stakeholder Partnership	Chair: Voluntary Sector Forum Barnardo's
Compact Board	Community First
Emotional Wellbeing & Mental Health Commissioning Group	Relate Barnardo's
LAC Young People & Care Leavers Improvement Group	Alabarè Barnardo's
Disability SEN Commissioning Group	Brandon Trust
Child Health Improvement Group	Spurgeons
Child Poverty Reduction Group	Home Start Kennet
Early Help Improvement Group	Spurgeons
Work Force Development Sub Group	Scrapstore Community First
Domestic Abuse Sub Group	Splitz
Youth Offending Board	Wiltshire Wildlife Trust
Joint Strategy Commissioning Group (Alcohol and Drugs)	Action on Addiction/Wiltshire Substance Misuse Service (Turning Point)/Motivate

Appendix ii

Programme of Events and Speakers at Forum Meetings July 15 – July 2017

Meeting Date	Topic	Speaker/Presenter
21/7/15	Child Sexual Exploitation On line CSE Tool	Blair Keltie Service Manager Child Sexual Exploitation & Missing Children Wiltshire Council (WC)
29/09/15	'Transformation plan for children and young people's mental health and wellbeing Consultation	James Fortune Lead Commissioner and Southwest LA Advisor CYP Mental Health Improvement (SWSCN) Commissioning, Performance and School Effectiveness Children's Services WC
	Young Carers new duties and expectations	Rachel Stewart Young Carer Service Manager Spurgeons
	Consultation Documents for response from members: Neglect Strategy Consultation Children's Centre Consultation	Amanda Bennett Chair CFVSF
24/11/15	Local Authority Designated Officer changes.	Amanda Headington Interim Designated Officer for Allegations Children's Services Wiltshire Council
	Wiltshire Fire & Rescue New Safety Centre	Yasmine Ellis Young person Development Manager Wiltshire Fire & Rescue
02/02/16	Neglect	Debrah Barlow Principal social worker Children's Services WC
	Local authority duties for Care Leavers	Martin Davies Head of Care, Placements and EDS WC
12/4/16	Introduction to Audit of safeguarding needs. Progress of Forum to date Reshaping exercise with members following notification of funding reduction	Amanda Bennett Chair VSF
12/7/16	Support services for young people with SEND	Vicki Dunicliffe Partnership/Education Officer Post 16 SEN WC Marnie Kemp – Community Connecting Team Leader Tony Green – Foundation Curriculum Manager Wiltshire College Tina Paget – Principal Fairfield College Phil Egan – 0 – 25 SEND Team Manager WC
27/9/16	Early Help Event	Clr Laura Mayes Mal Munday Head of service Early Help Operational Children's services, Wiltshire Council Andrea Brazier – Early help Service Manager WC Amanda Bennett Chair CFVSF

29/11/16	Addressing Child Poverty in Wiltshire	Sarah Heathcote Head of Service, Children's Health Improvement and Public Health Wilshire.
	Supporting Military Families	Nicola Sage Community Development Worker & David Donaldson Community Support Senior Dev Worker Army Welfare Service
17/1/17	Digital Assessment & referral Tool (DART) - Pilot	Lucy Lewis Senior Commissioning officer Commissioning, Performance and School Effectiveness Children's Services Wiltshire Council
	Building Bridges Funding Programme	Dave Potts Head of Community Development Community First
7/3/17	The rollout and implementation of Universal Credit	Jackie Tuckett – Business Development Manager, Wiltshire, Dept for Work and Pensions, Chippenham Jobcentre
	Savvy Saver Project.	Kirsten Kerr Savvy Saver Project Manager Wiltshire Citizens Advice Bureau
	Evidencing Quality and Influencing the Quality and Practice of other agencies.	Christine Robinson Quality Assurance Manager, Wiltshire Safeguarding Children Board
29/3/17	Networking event with Wiltshire Council Community Engagement Mangers	Amanda Bennett Chair VSF Marc Read Community Engagement Manager Tidworth
16/5/17	Army Covenant Grant Scheme	Emily Higson Corporate Support Manager Wiltshire Council
	Transformation plan for children and young people's mental health and wellbeing - Update	James Fortune Lead Commissioner and Southwest LA Advisor CYP Mental Health Improvement (SWSCN) Commissioning, Performance and School Effectiveness Children's Services WC
11/7/17	Children's Services Integration Project	Lucy Townsend Head of Safeguarding & Assessment, CSI Project Lead, Wiltshire Council, Children's Services Tamsin Stone Lead Commissioner, CSI Project Officer, Wiltshire Council, Children's Services
	RunAClub	Linda Cantillon-Guyatt Account Manager RunAClub