

## **Team Around the School (TAS) – Implementation Update**

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Cabinet Member: Frances Nicholson

Division and Local Member: All

### **1. Summary**

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to set out the background to the development of the Team Around the School (TAS) model and to update the Committee on the progress being made to implement the model across the Local Authority..
- 1.2. The TAS model is a key early help approach that supports the targets set out in the County Plan relating to Childrens Services in particular those relating to improving our Children’s Services Ofsted rating and improving educational outcomes for disadvantaged children. TAS is also a key delivery vehicle for the Children and Young People’s Plan.

### **2. Issues for consideration / Recommendations**

- 2.1. Scrutiny Committee is asked to review the progress being made in relation to the implementation of the TAS model.

### **3. Background**

- 3.1. One of the judgements made by Ofsted following its inspection of our Children’s Services was that we needed to progress the early help strategy more swiftly, ensure that it was well embedded in practice across the partnership and that thresholds for services were better understood and implemented to reduce the number of inappropriate referrals and re-referrals to children’s services.
- 3.2. Following discussions with school leaders, through The Compact, now the Somerset Education Partnership Board, and with GP federations in the spring term 2015, it was agreed that schools were best placed to be the drivers for improving early identification of need and the coordination of early support as they are a universal service with regular and consistent access to the vast majority of the children and young people within the County.
- 3.3. An Early help Steering Group was established consisting of LA, school, Getset and Parent and Family Support Advisors (PFSA) representatives to determine how this work could be taken forward .
- 3.4. The issues that needed to be addressed were agreed as follows:
  - **Our vulnerable children are not doing well in Somerset** – previous reports to scrutiny on educational outcomes has identified this as an issue and it is a clear priority for improvement in The County Plan, The Children and Young Peoples Plan and the County Education Vision and Strategy

- **Strengthen local/partner relationships** – Ofsted identified that partnership working was an area for improvement. From discussions with school and other agency staff it was clear that this was an area that needed to improve
  - **Better deployment of multi-agency resources** – it was apparent through discussions with staff from a range of agencies that there was duplication of some work taking place and confusion in families about what support was being delivered by whom. It was recognised that this was both unnecessary and inefficient
  - **Better support network for frontline staff (ie.– PFSA's are managed by school based staff and often work in isolation without effective professional supervision and support.**
  - **Need to address the 'refer on' culture and all partners hold appropriate level of risk** – at the time that discussions were taking place about what model should be put in place to deliver the changes required the schools sector was one of the highest referring sectors to Somerset Direct with the lowest conversion rate.
  - **Consistent application of thresholds** – it was clear from referrals to Somerset Direct and from discussions with school staff that there was a lack of understanding around the application of the Thresholds leading to inappropriate referrals and frustration when cases were referred back as not meeting the Thresholds for a particular level of support.
  - **Pockets of good practice across County** – there was a need to identify and build in what were recognised as effective models of working which had the potential to deliver the changes required
  - **Align Early Help with school improvement** – improving outcomes for vulnerable pupils could not just be achieved by schools in isolation from other agencies. It is recognised that early identification of need and effective early help from a range of agencies alongside high quality teaching are essential in supporting vulnerable pupils to achieve their potential.
- 3.5.** Two schools, King Alfred's, Burnham on Sea and The Blue School, Wells were already operating a way of working that involved regular multi-agency meetings, coordinated by senior staff of the school and involving feeder school staff that discussed pupils causing concern, agreed what support was required from which agency and then monitored impact. It was agreed by the Early Help Steering Group that this model should be explored further as a formal pilot and Wadham Community School agreed to join the pilot and coordinate the work in their area of the County i.e. Crewkerne and Ilminster.
- 3.6.** Working with these schools has led to the development of the TAS model with the following aims:
- To provide a mechanism for schools to meet with family support services and other key partners on a regular basis in order to have shared conversations about children and young people where concerns have

been identified and plan the delivery of and monitor the impact of support (aimed at Level 2 'Additional' need)

- To build trust and improve communication across agencies
- To ensure early help resources from all agencies involved are utilised in the most effective way
- To reduce exclusions, improve attendance, educational outcomes and overall wellbeing

**3.7.** The Early Help Steering Group also agreed a set of principles that should apply to the TAS:

- Ensure the support is wrapped round the child and family in a suitably timely fashion for our 0-25 year olds
- Close gaps for all vulnerable groups
- Removing barriers to learning as early as possible
- Create well managed supportive but challenging networks
- Build trust and improve communication so that information and data is shared effectively and suitably.
- Ensure the alignment of a number of agency agendas all focused to the principle of the child at the centre and without any sense of agency 'barriers' to meeting need
- Simple referral systems, one pathway approach and clear monitoring and evaluation of an outcomes based approach
- Track and monitor the child, young person and family's progress; using the Behaviour and Vulnerability Profiling Tool (BVPT), an assessment model developed by a Somerset Pupil Referral Unit, and Early Help Assessment framework as necessary.

**3.8.** Towards the end of the summer term 2016 a simple evaluation of the impact of the model in the three pilot areas was undertaken and the following findings were made:

- Partners are starting to see the benefits of regular multi-agency meetings
- Chair of TAS has oversight of children from other schools when those school heads are not in attendance
- Schools are reporting that actions are being taken more swiftly by other agencies
- Good spirit in holding partners to account
- Strengthening relationships between partners – discussions help to understand thresholds
- Been helpful to use the behaviour and vulnerability profiling tool (BVPT)
- Highlighting pressures on PFSA's (high caseloads)
- Reinforcing the need to complete Early Help Assessments to start building evidence early on
- Good way of keeping up to date with changes (ie in CSC)
- Difficult to show impact on academic progress
- Saving other agencies time - School Nursing Team, Education attendance, Police
- Struggling to get attendance from some agencies due to stretched resources
- The majority of pupils supported through programmes put in place by the TAS had reduced scores on the BVPT, increased attendance, reduced exclusions and reduced use of reduced timetables.

- 3.9. A recent analysis of calls to Somerset Direct now shows that the schools sector is one of the lowest referring agencies with one of the highest conversion rates which is a significant change from a year ago. Whilst this cannot be solely attributed to the delivery of the TAS model it is reasonable to assume that it is a significant contributory factor
- 3.10. As a result of the pilot work a Team Around the School Handbook and Toolkit has been developed and the model is being rolled out across the County. The concept has been enthusiastically received by schools and other agencies although it is recognized that as we scale up the model agencies and services will have to consider how best to support the working of the model. All Community Learning Partnerships are engaged with the majority having started TAS meetings although it is reasonable to say that they are at different stages of maturity. The intention is that the model will be embedded across the County by the end of this academic year 2016-2017.
- 3.11. Childrens Social Care has agreed to provide group supervision to PFSAs in each area and have also committed to attending each TAS on a monthly basis.
- 3.12. The Early Help Steering Group has been replaced by the TAS Strategy Group which has responsibility for overseeing the development and delivery of the model across the County and considering how it could develop in to the future.
- 3.13. Over the remainder of the academic year we will be monitoring implementation across the County and developing an audit tool to support the assessment of the delivery and effectiveness of the model. This will include the development of a set of performance indicators to support that assessment in particular looking at how the work of the TAS contributes towards improved educational outcomes for those pupils supported through the process
- 3.14. The work of the TAS is reported through both the Early Help Strategic Commissioning Programme Board and the Childrens Trust Executive.

#### **4. Consultations undertaken**

- 4.1. The initial proposals around the development of the TAS Model arose following consultation with schools and GP federations.

#### **5. Implications**

- 5.1. The successful roll out and further development of the TAS model across the County is a key component of delivering the Children and Young Peoples Plan and improving outcomes for vulnerable groups

#### **6. Background papers**

- 6.1. Team Around the School Handbook  
Team Around the School Toolkit

**Note:** For sight of individual background papers please contact the report author