



Children Services Update – PAF Scrutiny Committee



Children Services Update

COVID-19: Temporary Operating Model



Managers & Duty Teams office based on a rota system – now 60% of staff in



Most Contact, Reviews and Conferences held as virtual online/hybrid – increased attendance from GPs and CYP



All cases risk assessed: a) risk to child, and b) risk of infection

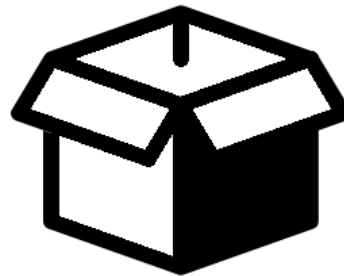


Most children and families (>85%) were seen face-to-face – walks in the park, talk in the garden...

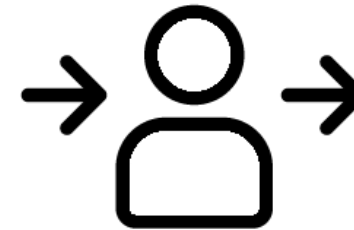
"You have to smell neglect"



Maintained standards: virtual visiting was the only regulatory easement used



Family Centres distributed Boredom Boxes and Food Parcels



Redeployed staff from Childrens Social Care – working on Risk Assessments with Schools



Children Services

- We have worked hard to manage demand including:
 - Effective Support for Children and Families in Essex
 - Police Officers in the C&F Hub to improve quality of referrals
- Referrals from schools down 97% at the start of the lockdown, and lower than usual in the autumn term – possible pent-up demand for service, when schools get back to normal.
- Generally there are fewer referrals, but lower level referrals to Family Solutions has increased
- Child Protection Plan rates have increased since the first lockdown, after years of stability, reflecting pressure in the middle of the system (**Oct 2020 - 650 plans / Oct 2019 – 542 plans**)
- Cases are more complex and sometimes assessments are taking longer
- We achieve good outcomes for young people, effectively preventing escalation into proceedings



Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service

- Through COVID the ECFWS have managed to keep services running successfully.
- Services have moved online and in addition where needed face to face contacts continued such as new birth visits and most targeted provision.
- At the height of the pandemic they were reaching more of the most vulnerable families this year than in comparison to last year.

Key challenges are:

- Staffing levels particularly in the South area.
- Current restrictions are limiting the ECFWS practitioner's ability to see families, children and young people face to face.
- Next steps is reviewing the ongoing working relationship between ECFWS and the Early years and Childcare settings to understand what further support we can put in place for children with emerging additional needs/SEND as a result of COVID.



Domestic Abuse

- The Southend Essex and Thurrock Domestic Abuse partnership Board has and continues to work effectively together
- Providers of services have worked hard with the LA to ensure victims can get help when and where they need it
- There have been a number of successful social media, press and radio campaigns
- Call to our single point of access have increased, many calls being for information, advice and guidance
- Cases have not increased in Essex (as per eastern region). However, those being opened are higher risk and more complex because lock downs have restricted victims' opportunities to access support early
- Partners are currently preparing for the new statutory duties expected to come into force 1st April 2020 when ECC will have a statutory duty to make provision for victims of domestic abuse



Projects



Tendring Project

- Tendring district is an outlier in terms of having the highest number of children in care compared to other parts of Essex (58 children per 10,000 in Tendring vs 35 per 10,000 in Essex).
- A deep dive was undertaken in order to better understand the reasons behind this and to explore what could be done to address it and bring Tendring into line with other areas
- In July we agreed a business case for the recruitment of a multi-disciplinary team who would be:
 - A central point of contact for frontline teams
 - Flexible resource; distribution and allocation of support is easier to manage and target at most complex cases
 - Opportunities for coaching/mentoring are increased by having a centralised model/team
 - Experience sharing between specialist workers and clear line of sight of trends is improved
 - Opportunity to improve expertise of existing teams
 - Support the parents as people, not just as parents


Key activities (December 2020)

- Team Manager recruited and started
- Recruitment process started for an Independent Domestic Violence Adviser
- Recruitment process for Drug & Alcohol worker interviews undertaken
- Referral criteria and form drafted
- Outcomes Framework and KPI's drafted
- Engagement of partners
- Referral form agreed and signed off
- This project is coming to scrutiny separately in the future.



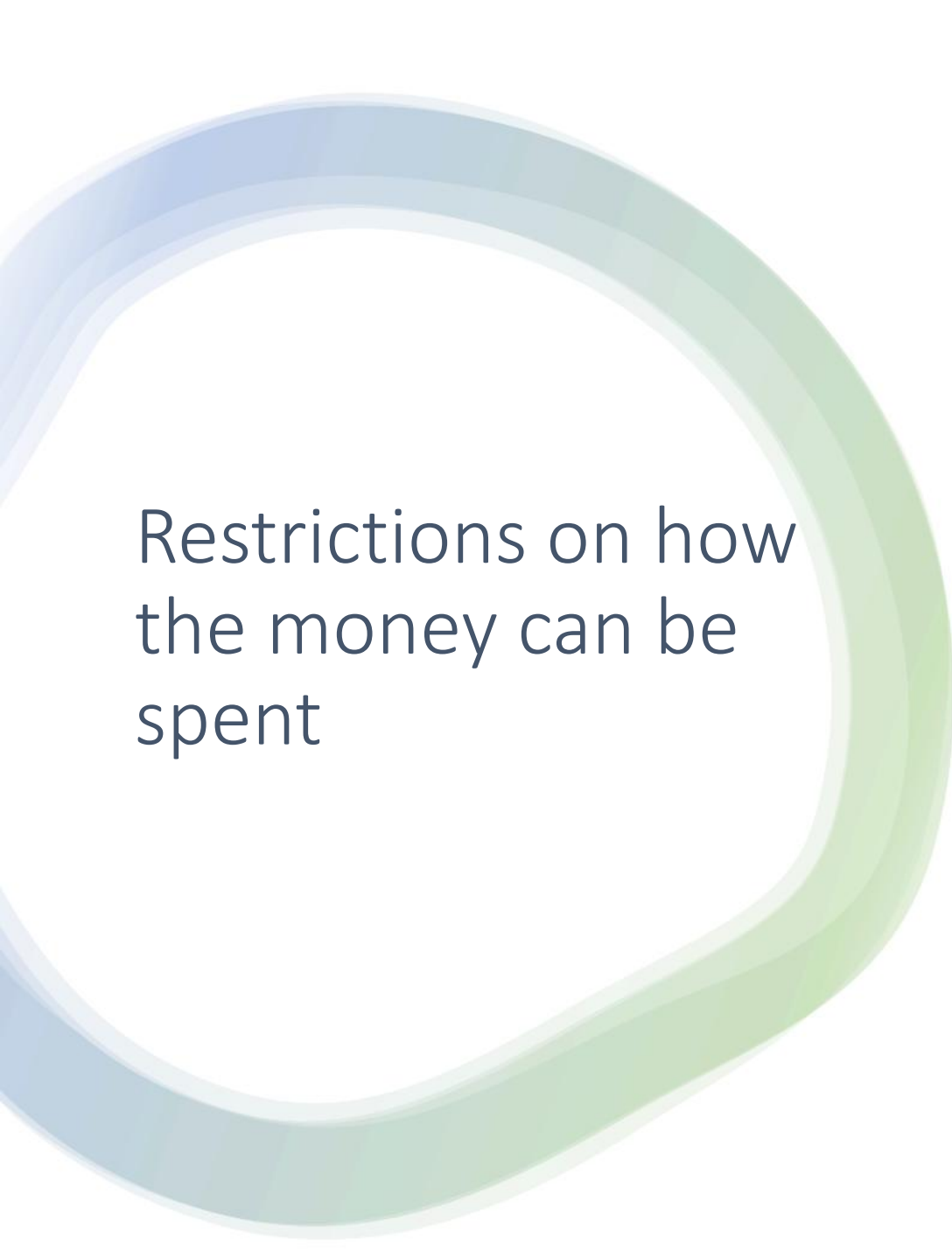
Working Families Programme

- July 2019 Full Council motion re Social Mobility and Social Justice.
- Helping 'hard working families' that sit just above the need for intervention - identified with reference to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation Minimum Income Standard (MIS).
- COVID-19 prevented us from doing our research with 'Britain thinks' earlier in the year.
- However the project adapted, and dovetailed with other initiatives such as the holiday hunger programme and laptop scheme.
- Our current focus has been on opportunities around childcare, we expecting to have information on this in the new year.



The 2 pots of
money (£2.4m +
£3.8m)

- Essex is using £3.8m winter funding from government to **support those most in need with the cost of food, energy and water bills and household essentials**
- It will be used between 1 December and 31 March 2021 to provide
- This funding is on top of the £2.4m that was received in relation to Essex entering the High COVID-19 tier in October.
- It is from the Government's £170m Winter Grant Scheme announced by the Prime Minister on 8 November



Restrictions on how the money can be spent

- The Winter Grant money (£3.8m) must be spent by 31 March – unused funds will go back to Government
- 80% will go to families with children affected by the pandemic – not just those who qualify for free school meals
- 20% will go to other vulnerable households
- 80% will be for food, 20% for help with energy and water bills and other household essentials