

South Somerset Supporting Families Programme - Supporting struggling families and improving life chances for children and young people.

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Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to set out details of a proposed programme delivery to meet the Council Plan Priority Project 7 - support struggling families and help to address child poverty and low rates of social mobility in the district, and to seek approval for the funding required to enable delivery.

Forward Plan

2. This report appeared/ on the District Executive Forward Plan with an anticipated Committee date of 7th May 2020.

Public Interest

3. In February 2020 the Council approved the Council Plan 2020 – 2024 and the Annual Action Plan 2020 – 21. One of the areas of focus in the Council Plan is to enable healthy communities which are cohesive, sustainable and enjoy a high quality of life. Within this area of focus is a priority project to support struggling families and help address child poverty and low rates of social mobility in the district. This report sets out the current challenges faced and a proposal for a programme of work to meet those challenges.

Recommendations

4. That District Executive
 - a) approve the engagement of Yeovil4Family as a key partner to help deliver the South Somerset Supporting Families Programme to deliver the Council's priority project to support struggling families and help address child poverty and low rates of social mobility in the district
 - b) Agree in principle engagement for period of three years, subject to meeting agreed milestones for delivery or outcomes across South Somerset



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- c) Approve the allocation of funding for Yeovil4Family to carry out this programme of work in the sum of up to £361k for Year 1 of the project from the Community Initiatives Reserve
- d) Note that a quarterly performance report will be brought to District Executive along with all the priority projects from the council plan
- e) Agree that a decision on a future funding allocation of £303k for each of the following two years of the programme will be brought before members at month 10 and 22 after consideration of outcomes
- f) Agree to the development of a Multi-agency plan to address child poverty and social mobility across South Somerset
- g) Delegate to the Director Place appropriate branding to reflect the cross District scope of the project

Background

- 5. In 2019, 25% of Children in South Somerset were growing up in poverty. With the economic impact of the Coronavirus, this number is expected to increase. Being born into a disadvantaged background means the chances of getting good qualifications and a good job are poor. The educational attainment of Children from poor backgrounds in Somerset on leaving school is 22 months behind the national average.
- 6. The educational attainment of a child from a poor background is already surpassed by that of a less able child from a wealthier background by the age of seven. Somerset is towards the bottom of the national league table in relation to social mobility meaning that many of those born in to poor families are likely to stay in poverty for their lifetime.

Improving the lives and life chances of families

The need for action now

- 7. The background (paras 5 & 6) in this report together with the following paragraphs demonstrates the need to urgently tackle the challenges faced by families and communities in South Somerset. The causes of child poverty and low social mobility are complex and the remedies will need the engagement of a variety of organisations from the public, community and private sectors. Therefore it is proposed to develop a Multi-agency plan to tackle child poverty and low social mobility in South Somerset. In the meantime, whilst this is being developed, applying the experience of national and local initiatives, there is scope for making interventions now that will support families and improve the position of some of the district's children.
- 8. The chance that a child will live in a deprived area in Somerset is increasingly likely - we now have 29 neighbourhoods within the 20% most deprived.



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Specifically for income deprivation affecting children, there are seven neighbourhoods in the 20% most deprived nationally, with one neighbourhood in the 10% most deprived nationally. In addition, children from poorer households in South Somerset finish school with an average educational attainment that is two years behind the national average attainment. The Coronavirus has impacted economically most on individuals and households on the lowest incomes and who were already struggling. Whilst awaiting the formal data, it is anticipated that as a result of the Coronavirus, which has seen increases in the jobless count, increases in claims for universal credit and increases in requests for support to the district council in dealing with hardship, the levels of child poverty and deprivation will increase and the rate of social mobility will decrease. As an example, the claims for support with Council Tax have increased by more than 500%.

9. Unless poor social mobility and childhood poverty are tackled, many of South Somerset children's life opportunities will not improve, and disadvantage will carry over into their youth and adulthood. In addition, many children from poor backgrounds are not achieving their potential and as a result, neither benefitting from nor contributing to as fully as they could to a growing local economy.
10. Children from poor families are more likely to experience poor physical and mental health thus further compounding their social and economic exclusion.

Understanding the challenge

11. Whilst some of the solutions to social mobility and eradicating poverty rest within the education system, there are many factors outside of the school environment that schools have little influence over that contribute both to educational attainment as well as life skills and life chances.
12. Struggling families are often characterised by one or more of the following traits: precarious employment (zero hours contracts or multiple part-time roles)/unemployment; unstable housing situation; benefits dependency; utilisation of community sector support e.g. food banks; high engagement and use of services such as housing, children's social care, health services, police; poor school attendance and attainment record of children.
13. Every family is unique with different needs and challenges. Those needs must be recognised and understood and support given to access the help they need and build capability to find solutions to the challenges they face.
14. Building capability and resilience within the family and in particular the children, is an important factor enabling them to cope with future challenges they will face with confidence.
15. Gaining the trust of a family is paramount in being able to identify their needs and it is recognised that the council is not best placed to undertake this work. This is because the fact that it represents authority can be a barrier to many families and the engagement requires openness and trust. In addition, the council does not



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have all the skill sets required to engage with families in a very different way to how it does in the service provision environment.

16. In addition to engagement with families who are already struggling we also want to reduce the number of families reaching that point.

Project Aims & Outcomes

17. The project aim is to provide support across South Somerset to struggling families to help them to be in a better position to help themselves. In particular the target outcomes for the three years of the project are:

- Creation of a more stable environment within families
- Increased attendance and educational attainment of children
- Decreased engagement of families with public services
- Reduce the number of children living in poverty
- Improve the chances that a person born into disadvantage will do well in school and get a well-paid job
- Improve the quality of life for struggling families
- To reduce the number of families reaching the point of struggling

18. In the long term, subject to the project's success and continuation beyond the first three years, the target outcomes are:

- Reduced rates of child poverty
- Increased rates of social mobility
- Improved educational attainment of children from poorer families – closing the gap on those from non-poor backgrounds
- Higher skill levels amongst South Somerset's young people that better match the needs of local employers and the modern economy
- Contribution towards reducing deprivation in South Somerset and a reduction in the number of neighbourhoods in the top 20% most deprived nationally

Background – Yeovil4Family

19. Yeovil4Family (Y4F) was established in 2011 to support families across South Somerset who are isolated, have complex and challenging needs, or have established chaotic patterns and behaviours. Yeovil4Family provide a dual approach of Family Link Workers and Volunteer Family Mentors. Family Link Workers work with the family to develop a way forward, liaise with all associated agencies, and empower the family to make positive changes, establish better support networks, and develop more stable routines and behaviours.
20. Whilst Yeovil4Family is the key delivery partner, it is important to stress that the programme of support for families proposed to be provided will not just be within Yeovil but will be across South Somerset.



The Support They Offer

21. Yeovil4Family aims to provide support to people, in order to:

- 'help people to help themselves' to make changes and find solutions to their challenges bringing new hope into their lives;
- Turn the tide of family breakdown;
- See children prosper in a loving and caring environment;
- Develop positive and constructive relationships;
- Enhance social and life skills across all ages.

22. Recognising the impact of the work Yeovil4Family has achieved since it was established in 2011 the Council approached them with a project brief to scale up the number of families they engage with, extend the reach of that support to cover the whole district to meet the aims of the Council's priority project.

Delivery proposal – Yeovil4Family

Programme Delivery

23. This programme will be a significant expansion of the current Yeovil4Family programme across the whole of South Somerset. Yeovil4Family currently supports up to 75 families at a time with the majority of families being in Yeovil, but with families in Chard and a number of villages too.

24. Y4F has a good track record of work in this area, having successfully delivered support to 243 families through the Government's Troubled Families programme between 2012-2015. SSDC has continued to work in close partnership to deliver tailored support to families and individuals for the past 5 years since then

25. This programme would see an expansion of that capacity to 200 families extending across south Somerset including Wincanton and Chard. This expansion would happen in stages, with two phases of recruitment planned in May and September, and a 12 week timeframe from commencement of recruitment process to completion of induction and training.

26. The proposed model would provide an upscale to 100 families by September 2020 (primarily in and around Yeovil) and further upscale to 200 families in the final quarter, March 2021 meaning that by the beginning of year two the programme would be fully deployed across the whole district. This would be ahead of project timetable in the Council Plan.

27. Link workers will, be allocated cases by locality so they can partner effectively with the relevant school or GP, and Y4F will explore potential hot desk facilities to enable Link Workers to spend some time based in their locality for more effective and efficient working.

28. While the programme will be primarily carried out by Yeovil4Family it will have a multi-agency approach involving South Somerset District Council, the Police, Somerset County Council, Yarlington Housing Group, Schools and GP surgeries

Innovation

29. There is good evidence that the Y4F model works and provides excellent and long standing results. That is because they are committed to long term support that is embedded in the family and in the home. Support that empowers the family to make positive choices and changes. Collaboration with agencies to provide a co-ordinated package of support around the family. Support that is tailored to each unique family, with priorities and goals that are set by the family. Referrals will come from a number of sources/agencies and different teams across SSDC
30. Y4F has faith in this model and a long history of great results that prove its effectiveness. They recognise there are real opportunities for innovation. Not so much in what the support looks like, but more in how we identify families and work more closely with partners and agencies to deliver outcomes more quickly.
31. SSDC is working with Somerset County Council on using data led intelligence to identify areas in the district where particular challenges exist which we will use to target support in areas most in need.
32. Y4F will alongside this work with agencies such as schools, GPs surgeries and housing associations to identify families who need support earlier, to engage them earlier, and be more effective and more efficient in support provision.
33. Y4F also believe that closer working with these partners will offer greater opportunities for collaborative learning. It will enable patterns that have been missed before to be recognised and incorporated into the intelligence used to design new solutions. This will, in turn, enable Y4F to respond quicker in the support curve and deliver even better outcomes. It will also enable those agencies to be more effective in their own services and spot issues earlier in the support curve.

Innovation partners

34. Preparatory conversations with a few schools, and one GP surgery have been undertaken and are all very keen to collaborate with Y4F on this project. They are also developing a new style of collaboration with Yarlington Housing Group. Currently the schools and GP are all based in Yeovil, but Y4F aim to roll out this model across the whole district. Schools and GPs and other partners including the police will enable Y4F to connect more into the local partnerships, provide a point of connection into the community, and be a point of introduction to the families.



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35. It is anticipated that whilst the capacity will be around 200 families at a time, the impact of the innovation, and the learning and development it offers will mean that more of the interventions will be for a period shorter than the 12 month 'standard' at present. This would mean that the capacity to help more families across a 12 month period would expand by up to 30% in year 2, and up to 50% in year 3, meaning 260 families supported across year 2, and 300 across year 3.
36. Since 2015 the Government's Troubled Families project has been led by SCC and has overseen the delivery of support to families through a range of partners across Somerset. This model will continue until March 2021. The work of Y4F compliments this model as the team are able to deliver bespoke interventions in people's homes, addressing issues which mainstream agencies are often unable to reach. Going forward we are working with SCC to ensure that the work we are proposing with Y4F fills gaps, meets the targets of all partners and enables us to share data effectively for the benefit of the families we are all working with

Programme commencement

37. Yeovil4Family have recently undertaken interviews for new link workers on another area of activity and have two candidates ready to appoint if members agree the project proposal. They have capacity to interview further remotely for as long as it is necessary and are working on adapting our training to be online.
38. While there is some work to be done on office accommodation changes and IT support provision, work can begin on the project immediately on approval by members to proceed.

Project Timeframe

39. It is proposed that the project will run for an initial period of three years with gateway reviews at months 10 and 22.

Governance & Performance

40. The project sponsor will be the Director of Place and the Portfolio Holder will be Cllr. Mike Best
41. A Multi-agency Steering Group will be established to oversee the programme roll-out, coordinate agency input, learn the lessons from the programme and contribute to the development of the longer term plan for tackling child poverty and low social mobility.
42. A progress report will be produced for members every three months. A set of milestones and metrics will ensure progress towards the stated outcomes through the life of the project as part of progress the normal quarterly performance monitoring cycle



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43. Progress will also be considered monthly at the Healthy, Self-Reliant Communities Community of Practice with feedback and suggestions for enhancing project delivery feeding into the project steering group for discussion and implementation.
44. The council have a current Service Level Agreement, monitored monthly, which will be adapted to ensure performance is measured and all spend is appropriate.

Financial Implications

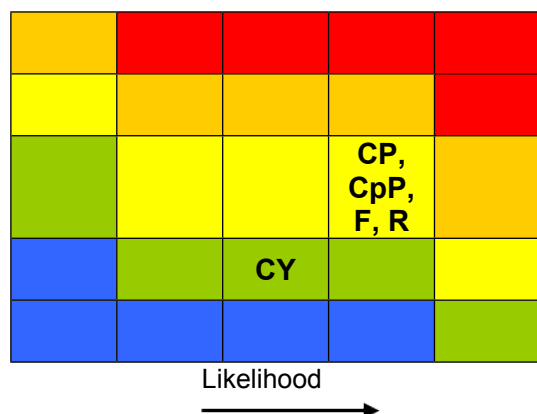
Project costs

45. There are a number of set up costs in year one of the project in addition to the costs associated with running the project. First year costs are forecast to be £360k. Years two and three have lower forecast costs of £300k.
46. As part of the 2020/21 Revenue Budget Setting report approved by Full Council in February 2020, there was £524.4K set aside to a new Community Initiatives Reserve. Year one costs of £360K will be allocated from this reserve.
47. Funding for years two and three cannot be identified at this time, therefore would need to be built in to budget planning and considerations and brought back to District Executive for approval at month 10 and 22 after consideration of outcomes. As set out in other reports on the agenda, the Council is in a period of financial uncertainty due to the impact of the Coronavirus on our income and expenditure. Therefore, it is not possible to fully commit to funding the programme beyond the first year. Given the impacts of the Coronavirus on the rate of child poverty, officers will work to identify what funds might be available in the Recovery Planning, to assist with delivery of the scheme going forward.

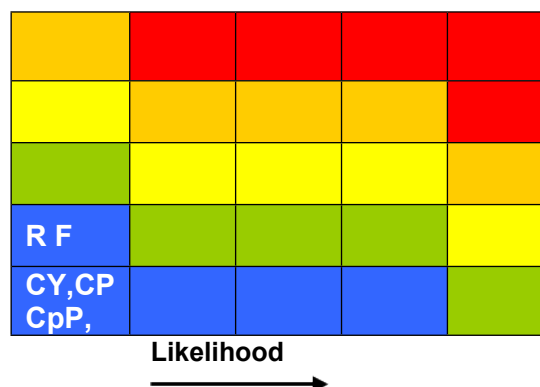
Risk Matrix

The risk matrix shows risk relating to the Corporate Plan headings.

Risk Profile before officer recommendations



Risk Profile after officer recommendations



Key

Categories	Colours (for further detail please refer to Risk management strategy)
R - Reputation	High impact and high probability
CpP - Corporate Plan Priorities	Major impact and major probability
CP - Community Priorities	Moderate impact and moderate probability
CY - Capacity	Minor impact and minor probability
F - Financial	Insignificant impact and insignificant probability

Council Plan Implications

This programme falls under the Healthy, Self-Reliant Communities area of focus in the Council Plan. Specifically it meets Priority Project 7: Develop proposals to support struggling families and help address child poverty and low rates of social mobility in the district

Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

This is a district wide programme requiring some travel to be undertaken by the Link workers when meeting the families they are supporting. Cases allocated cases by locality and Y4F will explore potential hot desk facilities to enable Link Workers to spend some time based in their locality for more efficient and effective working, which will also minimise travel related emissions.

Equality and Diversity Implications

There are no equality and diversity implications associated with this report.

Privacy Impact Assessment

This project will involve the use, sharing and processing of personal data and I have considered the requirements of Data Protection and Privacy. I have also consulted with the council's Data Protection specialist. She is satisfied that we have a legal gateway for sharing and processing data to support this project. A full Privacy Impact Assessment will be undertaken as part of the project.

Background Papers

- South Somerset District Council – Council Plan 2020 - 2024
- Somerset Improving Lives Strategy