

ITEM No ...4...

REPORT TO: CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVICES COMMITTEE –
9 SEPTEMBER 2019

REPORT ON: RAISING ATTAINMENT INCLUEM PROJECT

REPORT BY: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVICE

REPORT NO: 294-2019

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 This report provides an update on the Dundee and Includem Raising Attainment Project. The report is informed by the findings from an independent outcome evaluation commissioned by the Robertson Trust and completed by Blake Stevenson Ltd in April 2019. Following cessation of the Project in June 2019, this report also outlines the future nature of revised Includem service provision within the Children and Families Service from June 2019.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 The Children and Families Service Committee is asked to:

- i note the contents of the report; and
- ii instruct the Executive Director of Children and Families Service to continue to monitor the success of the revised Includem Service provision.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 Since its inception in January 2017, the Dundee and Includem Raising Attainment Project has been match funded by the Robertson Trust and the Scottish Attainment Challenge, jointly contributing £587,500 over the lifetime of the project. Funding from the Robertson Trust ended in June 2019. The cost associated with the continuation of the Includem project from August 2019 to June 2020 is £412,459. This will be funded by the Scottish Attainment Challenge £256,490 and Children and Families Service Budget of £155,969. Importantly, an expectation of the original Robertson Trust funding was that on conclusion of the project in June 2019, any continuation of related service provision would be informed by the independent evaluation.

4.0 MAIN TEXT

4.1 Background

Reference is made to Article III of the Minute of the Meeting of the Education Committee of 22 April 2013 (report no 177-2013 refers) where plans to commence the Dundee and Includem Raising Attainment Project were approved.

4.2 Building on the Inclusion Plus Project (2013-2016), the project has provided early intervention and intensive support for S1-S3 young people at risk of exclusion from school due to their behaviour, wellbeing or familial issues. Whilst raising attainment was the over-arching long term aim, the range of significant, deep-rooted challenges presented by many young people means that, in many cases, other more immediate needs like the loss of a parent, prison detention of a family member or substance misuse in a family must be addressed alongside classroom teaching. Where these problems are not addressed through pro-active, effective support, they can escalate and lead to young people being at risk of formal care. In every sense, this model of working is therefore consistent with the GIRFEC national practice model which emphasises the importance of prevention and places young people's wellbeing across 8 indicators as an essential prerequisite to improving outcomes.

- 4.3 The project also aims to embed Third Sector Includem provision within school pupil support teams to provide integrated support for young people and families. In doing so, it was hoped that this innovative funding model would inform and support system change towards preventative approaches.
- 4.4 In October 2017 and October 2018, the Children and Families Service Committee approved update reports in relation to the project (reference is made to Article IV of the minute of this Committee held on 30 October 2017, report no 349-2017 refers and Article V of the minute of this Committee held on 29 October 2018, report no 342-2018 refers).
- 4.5 Whilst reports considered by Committee to date have largely focussed on matters of project development, implementation and delivery, interim findings throughout the period January 2017 – June 2018 importantly indicated that the Includem support provided to young people and their families was highly valued by all stakeholders and was making an overall positive difference to the lives of young people and their families. In particular, the provision of support by Includem workers, predominantly out of school hours during evenings and weekends, was seen to be strengthening the bridge for many families between home and school. This was further strengthened by use of the 24/7 telephone helpline.
- 4.6 In April 2019 Blake Stevenson Ltd, following commissioning by The Robertson Trust, published their final evaluation report on the project. The final report considered the overall project delivery, its impact on young people and families and the learning that can be shared. Key findings from the report are outlined below.

4.7 **Project Implementation and Delivery**

- The evaluation shows that Includem workers have significantly enhanced school pupil support approaches by providing much needed out of school hours support to young people and their families. The integration of Includem workers within school pupil support teams and specifically Team Around The Child (TATC) meetings has proved successful in supporting pupil referrals to Includem.
- 4.8 Over the two year period, pupils were referred for a number of reasons, including poor attendance, challenging behaviour at school and in the community, risk-taking behaviours including substance misuse, sexual health concerns and offending. Most young people referred were male with the majority residing in the most deprived 20% areas (SIMD deciles 1 and 2).
- 4.9 Whilst it had been hoped to support up to 200 young people over the lifespan of the project, the number of young people supported over the two year period January 2017 – December 2018 was 127. Whilst contributory factors to this reduced throughput included the continued work with legacy pupil cases from the Inclusion Plus project and the time required to engage pupils and parents/carers in the referral procedures, this was principally due to the complex needs of referred young people and the required duration of support. The average duration of support for young people was 40 weeks rather than the anticipated 26 weeks. In addition, 3,183 phone calls were made between January 2017 and December 2018. Over 70% of all such calls were made between 09:00 – 15:30, with many being made directly by young people involved with the project and in need of immediate support.
- 4.10 The acute nature of needs evident in referred pupils/families was also a key factor in the number of missed, cancelled or refused contacts between Includem workers and young people/families. Such missed contacts were particularly prevalent during school holiday periods, when young people were more likely to disengage. As a result, Includem workers undertook a number of unplanned contacts with young people and families to supplement the missed, cancelled or refused contacts both during term-time and holidays.

4.11 Throughout the project, family contacts involving young people meeting with Includem workers jointly with their parents/carers in their own home has proved invaluable. Such meetings, in addition to supporting improved parenting strategies were also successful in signposting other services/agencies and support to parents.

4.12 **Project Outcomes**

The intended outcomes for the project are outlined within Appendix 1, which shows that support by Includem is designed to enable early intervention, create greater capacity in secondary school pupil support teams and promote a series of short, medium and long term outcomes for young people and their parents/carers. The short-term outcomes were focussed on changes in awareness, understanding and access to support amongst school staff and families along with improved attendance and engagement in school and learning by young people. Long-term outcomes include raised attainment evident beyond the term of the project.

For many young people receiving Includem support, no deterioration in the levels of inappropriate behaviour or attendance in the face of complex adverse life and familial circumstances was considered by key stakeholders as an immediate achievement. As a result of the intensive support provided by Includem, many of the 127 young people receiving the service are also now living in more stable home environments with improved boundaries and more confident parents/carers.

4.13 In one case study, for instance, a young person anonymised as David received support over a period of 78 weeks involving 3 contacts per week with him and/or his wider family. David was referred to the project because his attendance at school was poor and he was displaying challenging behaviour when in class. Mid-way through the programme, whilst still receiving support, his mother also died and he went to live with his grandmother on a voluntary basis. They both therefore required support in relation to their bereavement and adjusting to new circumstances at home. Initially, the project developed a relationship and built confidence with David through the means of playing football, before reflecting on his earlier behaviours and working with him on agreeing and acting on chore charts applicable to home and school. As a result, he better understood his behaviours; became more responsible and independent; settled with his grandmother; and improved his attendance at and engagement with school.

4.14 Qualitative data captured through interviews with school/Includem staff and importantly young people and parents/carers in receipt of Includem support indicate improvements in aspects including:

- Improved development of pupils' problem solving, emotional and behavioural management skills
- Improved capabilities in managing risk-taking behaviours (including young people staying safe on-line)
- Improved self-esteem and confidence within young people
- Improved parenting capabilities and parental confidence in managing and supporting their children resulting in improved family environments
- Greater stability in familial relationships resulting in an improved sense of wellbeing for young people and parents/carers
- Improved relationships between families and schools as a result of the bridge provided by Includem workers between home and school
- Increased access to support services by parents/carers following advice and support from Includem workers (e.g. Corner counselling services, financial advice, access to support groups)
- Crisis intervention work by Includem workers with young people during the school day in response to requests from young people, parents and schools.

4.15 In addition to the above, Includem workers have increased the capacity of schools to support pupils by enhancing schools' awareness of family circumstances and key events that otherwise the school may not have been aware of. Furthermore, Includem workers have successfully shared with school staff strategies and approaches that were proving successful outwith school hours to support young people.

4.16 **Revised Includem Service Provision from August 2019**

Following cessation of the Robertson Trust funding from June 2019, a revised and contracted Includem service will operate across the Children & Families Service from August 2019. In moving forward, the early intervention model will be merged with the well-established Children's Social Work contract to form a single service-wide contract which includes an established monitoring procedure.

4.17 The new single service-wide contract will be funded through the continuation of annual Scottish Attainment Challenge funding (£256,490) coupled with a maintenance of former Children's Social Work Includem funding of £155,969.

4.18 The new combined contract will cover the continuum of pupils' needs extending from early intervention to targeted provision. An equitable split of hours will be allocated between secondary schools and children's social work hours. This latter element, as traditionally has been the case, will continue to be used to prevent children with significant need entering external placements, including secure care.

4.19 In best meeting young people's needs, a degree of fluidity will exist in allocating Includem support hours to young people at different points on the continuum of needs from early intervention/prevention to acute/targeted.

4.20 The new single Service contract will be jointly managed by the Adolescent Team Manager, who traditionally has overseen Social Work Includem referrals in tandem with Senior Locality Officers responsible, amongst other things, for supporting pupils' attendance at school.

4.21 The above revised service provision will, in partnership with all stakeholders including Includem, be the subject of review during session 2019/20 with changes, where required, made to the new model in advance of any new contract agreement for session 2020/21.

5.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 This Report has been subject to an assessment of any impact on equality and diversity, fairness, poverty, environment and corporate risk. There are no major issues.

6.0 **CONSULTATIONS**

6.1 The Council Management Team have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

7.0 **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

7.1 None.

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Dundee City Council, Includem & Robertson Trust Raising Attainment Project

13/04/2017

