

Agenda Item 5

For Decision: Recruitment of a temporary Young People's Project Officer

Author: Kate Hellard, Community Projects Officer

Summary

This report and the various discussions which have informed its development are in response to rising concerns expressed by professionals, parents, other community members and councillors regarding county council cuts and declining opportunities to access both universal and specialist services for children, young people and their families.

Following these discussions, Cllrs comprising The Advisory Group (TAG) plus the lead Cllr in this area, Ali Barclay, have mapped a way forward and these recommendations are the result.

Cllrs will recall that a budget of £30k was allocated to fund agreed recommendations. The recommendation is to recruit a temporary community project officer for one year focusing on opportunities for children and young people. Because this field is fast moving with uncertainty around County Council funding streams, now and at least throughout the next financial year, a one-year contract appears to be the prudent way forward.

Background

FTC's way of working is, wherever possible, to nurture skills and assets already held in the community and to continue to empower and support residents and organisations. Thereby helping to build more resilient communities.

Whilst looking at young people's mental health we have identified that the needs associated with many issues for children, young people and their families, such as drugs, substance misuse, mental health and anti-social behaviour, are similar.

Practitioners and professionals have consistently told us, through the Young Peoples Mental Health forum, Sports Forum and Wellbeing forum, that they would like a locally coordinated, strategic approach to developing services for young people and that they consider the gathering and sharing of up to date and comprehensive information about the services that currently exist to be a priority.

FTC's 2013 Youth Services report identified that there would be an increase in young people aged 8 – 12 years old and recommended that Frome look to recruit a development worker to ensure that youth services were supported to meet demand and mitigate future funding cuts.

Coupled with more young people aged 8-12 years old, we are now in 2019 observing the impact of progressive cuts over the last 5 years. We are also anticipating the impact of the next tranche cuts, which are likely to include funding for early help level 2 Get Set services,

for example, to be cut to zero by March 2020. More children, young people and their families are reaching crisis and, not being able to access relatively cheap services like those provided by Get Set, are putting increasing strain on the higher-level statutory services.

Project sponsors and other councillors have, alongside Mendip Health Connections and Frome Medical Practice, informed recent discussions on what to do and how best to allocate the Health and Wellbeing funding of £30k budgeted for 2019/20. They have considered work to date, existing services, the impact of county council cuts and looked at some emerging issues and areas of significant concern such as rising levels of anxiety and depression in very young children.

Current Issues

The common theme running through all discussions is that residents are not easily able to access information about statutory and voluntary services available to them. The information around services for young people's mental health, including referral processes, is surprisingly most easily accessible on the FTC website [here](#). However, the bigger picture of children and family services is currently held on a number of other websites. Many services exist but mapping of these is inconsistent.

There is also a need to clearly identify where the gaps in service provision are now, and where they are likely to be in future. If we can do this, we will be able to help support the growth of new opportunities and the sustainability of existing projects.

As we say above, the flow of individuals looking to statutory services is rising, and many families are reporting that they are having trouble accessing specialist services because of rising thresholds. Communities and individuals could be better supported through a more person-centred approach, in order to support each other and consequently to reduce demand for expensive and overstretched specialist services.

Proposed Solution

To recruit a Children and Young Peoples Project Worker, for one year, to:

- Provide and coordinate training for parents, residents and practitioners in areas such as: spotting the signs of drug use, when and how to support a child / young person experiencing mental health issues and the best routes for signposting and for referrals. This could start with working in partnership with local schools and the Frome Learning Partnership, who have expressed interest in this.
- Promote a 'can do attitude' to supporting children and young people in the town. And aim to undertake some training of young people to become community connectors in line with Mendip Health Connectors model for adults. This might include training of some of our staff, and others in roles that engage with communities such as litter pickers.
- Continue to map existing services and identify models of good practice from other areas.

- Work with partner organisations, statutory and voluntary, to identify existing and emerging gaps in provision and find ways to support voluntary groups who could offer support in these areas.
- Continue the Young People's Mental Health Forum, which has been meeting quarterly, and has been effective in linking up statutory and voluntary services and providing a forum for networking and sharing of information.

We are currently exploring options for match funding for this role that could enable us to incorporate families who live in the surrounding villages but access services in the town. A verbal update will be provided following a meeting with Somerset County Council about this.

There is an opportunity to support the development of, and input data on to, the planned FTC database (CRM) which will enable residents, practitioners and other professionals to search and retrieve information about specific conditions, services and opportunities for children and young people.

Recommendations

1. Delegate responsibility to the Town Clerk and Community Projects Manager to draft a job description, based on the generic FTC Project Officer JD, in consultation with Cllr Shelia Gore (chair of Council Matters).
2. Agree to recruit a Young People's Project Officer for year one and utilise the £30k budget allocation accordingly.