

CABINET

24 MAY 2024

REPORT OF PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR PARTNERSHIPS

A.7 Family Solutions Update

PART 1 – KEY INFORMATION

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To recommend an additional Family Solutions Officer Post (Harwich) for a fixed term period of 12 months based on a review of the value for money / benefits such as the post would deliver on behalf of the Council and District.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Tendring Family Solutions Service provides an intensive service until families are able to sustain positive progress, or for a maximum of 12 months where risks and needs suggest this is necessary.

The service helps families experiencing a wide range of sometime complex issues and disadvantages – ranging from domestic violence and truancy to unemployment and mental ill health. Families enter the service on a voluntary basis in order to identify what they would like to change about family life, and are then empowered to go about making a change, and crucially to sustain it. This sustainability of change in their circumstances is key to reducing the demand on higher levels of social care and other services. Tendring Family Solutions is part of Essex Social Care, which was found to be outstanding in a recent Ofsted report.

*“Between April 1st 2023 and March 31st 2024, Family Solutions worked with a total of 1664 families. Of the cases closed after intervention across the service in this period, 81.4% of these had successful outcomes. **In the same calendar period Tendring closed 197 cases, of the cases that Tendring closed after intervention in this period, 90.0% had successful outcomes.**”*

The total numbers of families/cases Family Solutions worked with in 2023/24 decreased compared to the previous financial year, but the percentage of successful outcomes increased in the period:- Family Solutions worked with a total of 1,798 families in the 2022/23 year. Of the cases closed within the 2022/23 period, 79.0% of these were with successful outcomes (needs of families partially or completely met).”

Source: Tendring Family Solutions

A Family Solutions Officer (District wide role) became employed by Tendring District Council on a permanent basis in September 2018, following a number of fixed term contracts since 2013. The role is seconded to work alongside Officers within Essex County Council as part of the Tendring Family Solutions Team. The role is matrix managed across ECC and TDC.

An additional full time Family Solutions Officer post, funded through health inequalities funding from the Integrated Care Board commenced in September in 2022, on a fixed term contract to work within Tendring Family Solutions with a focus on supporting families in the Harwich area.

It was agreed to extend this post for a further year to September 2024 (utilising health inequalities funding).

The Harwich post undertook to understand the needs of families in the area through a Community Asset Mapping exercise - (available on request), as well as holding a case load of up to five families at any one time. Key highlights/outcomes of the postholder (working with partners) include;

- Forming the now established Harwich Community Forum, as well as
- the launch of the weekly 'Heart' food bank at the Salvation Army, with a number of partners in place to support those attending, – Ref Appendix A
- working alongside The Lounge, and relevant partners to support families in attendance, and as a result of demand, launching an after school weekly open session for children & families
- holding a case load of up to 5 families at any one time.

In addition to the above, a further Family Solutions post was agreed following a bid to the ECC Local Levelling up Fund, to support an additional Family Solutions post (district wide) for a period of 12months. This post was agreed with match funding from the Council's Health Inequalities funding in 2023.

Following the resignation of the Family Solutions officer for Harwich and as there was a limited amount of contract time and funding left for the Harwich post it was agreed to put the proposed funding for the 12 month district wide post with health inequalities funding to provide a more viable employment offer. That post has now been filled.

Subsequent to this due and to the previous success of the officer in Harwich an additional sum of £48,750 was identified as part of the Q3 Financial Performance Report considered by Cabinet on 19 April 2024. As set out the associated report, this sum was set aside pending the consideration of the value for money / benefit to the Council and District that is subject of this report.

Appendix B – provides an analysis of the savings to wider public services as a result of the interventions of the Family Solutions Officer working with a family.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- (a) approves the value for money / benefit review as set out in this report;**
- (b) following the earlier set aside of the associated funding, agrees to the establishment of an additional Family Solutions Officer Post in Harwich for a fixed term period of 12 months;**
- (c) requests that future funding of this fixed term post be included within the intended wider review of external grant funding; and**
- (d) requests future funding potentially being considered as part of the review of ongoing cost pressures within the long term financial forecast.**

REASON(S) FOR THE RECOMMENDATION(S)

Work of the Family Solutions Officers continues to have a significant impact on the families that

have been supported, showing both positive family outcomes and significant savings elsewhere in the public sector. (ref Appendix B). The work supports families for a maximum of 12 months and as outcomes are achieved, new families are allocated for support.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

Although the Council could choose not to fund these posts, this could have an impact on their continuation, which in turn may have an impact on the numbers of families that can be supported across the District.

PART 2 – IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

DELIVERING PRIORITIES

This post contributes to a number of priorities within the Corporate Plan including

- Working with Partners to Improve Quality of Life - in particular to promote safer, healthier, well connected and inclusive communities. The Family Solutions officer works with the most troubled families and for example helps provide access to mental health support to improve family's health and wellbeing, this can also support prevention of anti-social behaviour and help prevent individuals becoming victims of crime. The development of the Harwich Community Forum also supports better connections within the community and develops inclusivity. The Forum will also help support the achievement of the Corporate Priority for Pride in Our Area and Services to Residents by developing resilience and subsequently pride in the community.
- Raising Aspiration and Creating Opportunity - the Family Solutions role works with children in the family for example by reviewing educational health care plans, helping families to access specialist provision and if necessary supporting with children moving school so they return to full time attendance. This is particularly important in Harwich to make sure young people are supported to reach their potential in terms of future employment associated with renewable energy and Freeport.
- Pride in Our Area and Services to Residents – the Family Solutions role provides strong support for getting services right – in terms of how those services match to people's needs. As those who receive support from this role may live their life in chaos it can be difficult to access services and this role can make that connection. For example in terms of how they support around housing need and refer through to the housing team means that tenancies remain more sustainable or similarly their support around accessing benefits also means they can access the benefits services the Council offers more readily.

OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT (including with the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee and other stakeholders where the item concerns proposals relating to the Budget and Policy Framework)

The Children's and Families Directorate (ECC) are strong supporters of this service being delivered.

The post also supports the work of the Tendring Education Strategic Board priority of improving school attendance, which remains a significant challenge for schools currently. If attendance improves then this will impact attainment levels, giving each child and young

person the opportunity to reach their full potential.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS (including legislation & constitutional powers)

Is the recommendation a Key Decision (see the criteria stated here)	NO	If Yes, indicate which by which criteria it is a Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/> Significant effect on two or more wards <input type="checkbox"/> Involves £100,000 expenditure/income <input type="checkbox"/> Is otherwise significant for the service budget
		And when was the proposed decision published in the Notice of forthcoming decisions for the Council (must be 28 days at the latest prior to the meeting date)	

Although there is no legal requirement for the Council to fund this post, it supports the Council's corporate priorities.

There are no subsidy control implications as the funding is provided to second an officer to Essex County Council.

X **The Monitoring Officer confirms they have been made aware of the above and any additional comments from them are below:**

It is noted that the legal powers for funding the post are not provided within the legal section, therefore it is assumed that the General Power of Competence is being relied upon under the Localism Act 2011. It should be highlighted that this report will authorise the post for 2024/25, and further decision are required for continuation beyond 31st March 2025 and these should be made in a timely manner, as part of the external funding review or budget process.

FINANCE AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

As part of the Q3 Finance report to Cabinet (Appendix H of that report) it was agreed to allocate £48,750 for a Family Solutions Officer in Harwich for a year.

Further funding would need to be identified if it was determined that this post was required after the initial year's funding.

It is proposed that future funding of this fixed term post therefore be included within the intended wider review of external grant funding and potentially to be considered as part of the review of ongoing cost pressures within the long term financial forecast.

Even without further funding there is a level of sustainability built in by the presence of the Family Solutions Officer post as families move to a more sustainable existence with better benefits support, children accessing school etc. families can sustain improved outcomes.

X **The Section 151 Officer confirms they have been made aware of the above and any additional comments from them are below:**

There are no further comments over and above those set out elsewhere in this report.

As highlighted above, such fixed term post will be reflected in the on-going review of cost pressures where consideration can be given to their continuation or otherwise based on further value for money / benefit analysis reviews.

USE OF RESOURCES AND VALUE FOR MONEY

The following are submitted in respect of the indicated use of resources and value for money indicators:

A) Financial sustainability: how the body plans and manages its resources to ensure it can continue to deliver its services;	This role has been considered in relation to the Council’s wider cost pressures for 2024/25 and funding allocated within the Q3 Finance report to Cabinet in April 2023.
B) Governance: how the body ensures that it makes informed decisions and properly manages its risks, including; and	The Council continues to fund Family Solutions Officer post/s, and therefore understands the valuable contribution and impact. Reporting of work/activity is provided on a regular basis, as required.
C) Improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness: how the body uses information about its costs and performance to improve the way it manages and delivers its services.	As well as a focus on outcomes, reporting includes review of cost savings achieved through work with families, e.g. the prevention of referrals into higher tier services such as social care.

MILESTONES AND DELIVERY

Milestones and monitoring of the work is on a monthly basis, with joint meetings with the postholder, Executive Projects Manager and the Family Solutions Manager. Emerging trends and challenges with families are also discussed, this can also involve other Council and partner services/teams e.g. the Council’s Housing team.

ASSOCIATED RISKS AND MITIGATION

The Family Solutions post allow for the valuable work of the Family Solutions Officer to continue.

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

Both the Council and the ECC Family Solutions team work with an awareness of and commitment to equality, diversity and inclusive practices.

SOCIAL VALUE CONSIDERATIONS

The social value implications, wider financial and non-financial value created by the actions include the wellbeing of individuals and communities, social capital and the environment, particularly how they can support the development of resilient communities. Families are able to access, benefit and contribute to the many assets in their community.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL’S AIM TO BE NET ZERO BY 2030

No direct implications.

OTHER RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS OR IMPLICATIONS

Consideration has been given to the implications of the proposed decision in respect of the following and any significant issues are set out below.

Crime and Disorder	All Family Solutions Officers/activities are
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	carried out in line with the Council's Corporate plan, including safeguarding policies and procedures. As well as Essex County Council and the Children's Safeguarding Board practices. All Family Solutions Officers are subject to enhanced DBS checks.
Health Inequalities	<p>The Council recognises the significant benefits of the Family Solutions Officer roles in supporting families. The Tendring Family Solutions team work to improve the lives of children and families across the District. Without the interventions of the Family Solutions Officer these families are likely to experience greater instability and consequently greater health inequalities.</p> <p>The FS team empower families to make changes for the improvement of many aspects of their lives including health, housing, wellbeing, environment and education to enable them to have a positive future.</p>
Subsidy Control (the requirements of the Subsidy Control Act 2022 and the related Statutory Guidance)	N/A
Area or Ward affected	Wards across Harwich and Dovercourt

PART 3 – SUPPORTING INFORMATION

BACKGROUND

The benefits of the Family Solutions Officer post is clearly identified in Appendix B for example Family A was supported over a 5 month period with Family Solutions interventions which have helped result in correct diagnosis for autism, improving children's attendance at school and parents receiving further mental health support and being able to access Personal Independence Payment benefits. Cost benefits to the public purse are also identified in Appendix B.

This type of outcome is regularly repeated as Appendix B shows and demonstrates not just successful outcomes for those families facing the greatest challenges and health inequalities but also provides a saving to the public purse and so demonstrates effective use of resources. In particular the Family Solutions Officers work with those who are most hard to reach and with families who may not have engaged with services previously.

The Harwich post was a crucial addition to the existing Family Solutions offer as it provided wider outreach into one of the most deprived areas. In addition it allowed for building capacity in the local system by bringing a forum together of organisations who were not otherwise connected and can now share experiences and provide a joint offer to those most in need. In addition the Family Solutions Officer acted as a catalyst to bring organisations together so that

once relations had been formed those organisations would sustain the forum and take control of operation of the forum

Further work and benefits of these posts are identified below.

Family Solutions Officer (Harwich)

Funded by Health Inequalities funding, an additional Family Solutions officer commenced in September 2022 to work in the Harwich area.

For the first three months, the Family Solutions Officer undertook a mapping exercise to understand the community organisations and current support/services available to the community. To date the officer has held meetings with over thirty local organisations as part of this work.

Harwich Community Forum

Working alongside partners, the Officer has established the Harwich Community Forum, which brings together the Harwich community, allowing the opportunity for the Family Solutions Officer to build relationships, and ensuring partners understand the role of Family Solutions and the potential support that can be provided to vulnerable families.

“Harwich Community Forum” was set up for organisations that have been spoken to with regards to the mapping exercise. Meetings are held quarterly at the Salvation Army in Harwich. This meeting allows the opportunity to better understand the services each other offers, sharing information about current projects, and to understand challenges with a view to working more collaboratively. There is also the opportunity to promote their organisation with any events that they have coming up, or if they need any support with anything and promote how to refer into their service. This forum now has 23 organisations regularly attending. After each meeting the mapping exercise goes out for organisations to be updated.

The Lounge

The Lounge is run at the Esplanade Hall in Harwich. It is a community well being hub which is also used by various organisations and groups that seek to enable people to experience better wellbeing whilst recognising that it's ok not to be ok. Organisations include HOMESTART, The Ark centre, Essex Family Wellbeing Service, Futures in Mind, ACL, Parkinson's support, domestic violence support and a kids club. They aim to be inclusive and non-judgemental place where everyone finds a friendly welcome. The role has enabled the Harwich Family Solutions officer to have a presence in the Lounge and build relationships with the community that attend.

HEART

HEART is a food bank that runs on Friday mornings at the Salvation Army. This is a welcoming place for anybody to come to and they can either have a food bank parcel, coffee and cake and they can also chat to any of the professionals that attend such as Citizen's Advice, employment support, Peabody, health visitors and nurses. This is a very popular morning and on average they have up to 50 people attend. See Appendix A.

“Working with A has been an absolute pleasure. She is friendly whilst retaining a professional manner. It has been really helpful to have her advice regarding families we are working with and to know that in any interactions they have with A they will be treated gently with dignity and integrity. The networking meetings she has set up have been really informative and will enable us to work better together with other agencies going forward. We look forward to continuing to

work alongside A to serve the people of Harwich. A has also started a conversation up between the Salvation Army and the Foodbank on how we can better work together and improve the systems of how food parcels are done”

Community Manager Harwich Salvation Army

“It has been really good to have made contact with Family Solutions, and to establish a link. A has been a valuable source of local information and contacts. The Community Forum she organised enabled myself and others, to share information and make new partnerships, which is key to what The Lounge, where I am project lead, has to offer. Working with local families and having A as a partner has been very helpful in helping people move forward. I look forward to working together more in the future and seeing where The Lounge can be a better resource for the community with A's input”

Dovercourt Central Church and Project Lead for The Lounge, Harwich.

Regular attendance by the Family Solutions officer at key community group meetings e.g. The Lounge and Salvation Army is allowing her to provide support to some of the most vulnerable in the community.

In addition, the Family Solutions Officer also worked in partnership with Active Essex over the festive period to provide funding for families to visit the Electric Palace and Clacton Pier. (tickets and food provided). 28 family members attended which included 62 children:-

“We just wanted to say thank you so much for this evening, the boys had the best time, all come home buzzing, including T. They couldn't wait and opened their presents, L's gone to sleep with his police stuff in bed with him (did you know how much he loves police?!) And his chalk board on his desk ready for the morning, while I did his bedtime A snuggled up in their bed and read 40 pages of Ratburger! T is playing his new game and loved all the presents too. Thankyou so much, they were absolutely perfect. Have a lovely evening and Christmas”

“Thank you so much. The kids have had a great time. They have been so excited all week. It's great they've had their dinner and they're exhausted from running around. They will go straight to bed when we get in. I never get to just sit and relax with the kids. I was feeling shy about talking to other people but everyone was so nice”

“We have had the best time, Thank you. I really wasn't sure about coming but I'm really glad I did. I came because the kids wanted to and they have had a lovely time. They made new friends and played so well. P was so excited when you said Santa had called you and he is very excited about his present, they all are. They can't wait to open them.”

The Family Solutions Post provides value for money to the Council and its partners in relation to supporting those families most in need. If this work was not undertaken there would be extra costs accruing to the Council and its partners on an ongoing basis. Some of the costs are identified in Appendix B and although these often relate to partners they are equally relevant to the Council itself.

This includes for example support for children to obtain better educational outcomes which will have a long term effect on the Council's priorities as the Council seeks to support improved educational attainment and obtaining skills and employment as part of its approach around education via the Tendring Education Strategic Board.

Mental health support provided through referrals from the Family Solutions post will help

reduce conflict in family homes and in the community which will help reduce anti-social behaviour. Identifying where support can be provided by the Council to deliver adaptations to client's homes provides smoother access to Council services to ensure residents receive help when needed. This helps support wider partners outcomes helping to maintain health and wellbeing and reducing demand on acute services

A number of clients are also supported as they are referred to the Council's housing teams which ensures the Council can work with them before they reach crisis and put extra demand on the Council. The stability of a family's tenancy is crucial in terms of the demand they may put on the Council and wider partners both from a housing and wider service aspect. The Family Solutions officer works with those families in the most challenging circumstances and early identification of a deteriorating housing situation will not only allow the family to remain more stable but allows for lower levels of intervention from Council housing teams rather than a crisis response which may involve much more significant support.

Provision of support around increasing benefits for families also improves family stability which will reduce the demand on both Council and wider services as they would otherwise present in crisis and has wider outcomes in terms of independence as opposed to requiring service provision.

The delivery of the wider Harwich Community Forum also allows the community to build resilience and support itself so that issues do not present to the Council for resolution.

Although this post is proposed to be funded for one year currently it will be included as part of the review of grant funding and could be included as an ongoing cost pressure within the long term forecast is appropriate.

PREVIOUS RELEVANT DECISIONS

The Alliance provided £400, 000 for addressing inequality at place work within Tendring. This funding which is ring fenced to be spent on agreed initiatives, was accepted by Cabinet at the meeting held on 21st September 2021. The Cabinet report also outlined the agreed framework for spending the CCG funds and the associated governance arrangements – (reference the Memorandum of Understanding Appendix 3), which can be viewed (p89):

<https://tdcdemocracy.tendringdc.gov.uk/documents/g1838/Public%20reports%20pack%2017th-Sep-2021%2010.30%20Cabinet.pdf?T=10> .

The Alliance then provided an additional £200, 000 for addressing inequality at place work within Tendring resulting in a total of £600,000 available. This was accepted by Cabinet at its meeting on 17 March 2023.

[Report Template Part A \(tendringdc.gov.uk\)](#)

Officer decision (Dec 2023), to support fixed term peripatetic post utilising remaining Harwich post funding.

The Cabinet meeting on 19 April 2024 within the Q3 monitoring report considered the general fund adjustments (Appendix H) including for the Family Solutions Officer post (minutes yet to be published).

BACKGROUND PAPERS AND PUBLISHED REFERENCE MATERIAL

None

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Partners to Salvation Army Community Hub
Appendix B – Analysis of savings to public services of Family Solutions role

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