



Wiltshire
Children & Families
Voluntary Sector Forum

Annual report 2019-2020

Date: 28 May 2020

Background

Aim

The aim of the Wiltshire Children and Families Voluntary Sector Forum (CFVSF) is to work as a forum in order to enable the contribution of the voluntary and community sector to the Family and Children's Transformation Board (FACT Board) and newly developing safeguarding sub-groups, thereby promoting the contribution of the voluntary sector in the delivery of quality services. The aim is that through voluntary sector contribution we will improve the lives of children, young people and families living in Wiltshire.

Objectives

- 1) To safeguard the achievements to date of the CFVSF in attracting and sustaining engaged membership and raising the profile of the voluntary sector.
- 2) To enable CFVSF representatives to participate fully in the FACT Programme (multi-agency and Wiltshire wide) and to contribute towards effective commissioning of services for children and families in Wiltshire.
- 3) To ensure that forum members' voices are heard at a strategic level across the public sector and that they have an opportunity to influence and challenge decision making and service development.
- 4) To ensure that engagement with the voluntary sector is meaningful, purposeful and impactful.
- 5) To provide a mechanism for forum members to be consulted on key service changes and to continuously drive partnership working.
- 6) To maintain good working practices for the CFVSF, in consultation with its members, including facilitating targeted and relevant meetings, networking events and training.
- 7) To support children and families organisations in developing their knowledge and understanding of their role in relevant government initiatives and to keep children and young people safe.

Activity against objectives

1) To safeguard the achievements to date of the CFVFSF in attracting and sustaining engaged membership and raising the profile of the voluntary sector.

Up until the commencement of the COVID-19 lockdown, this had been a year of stability in comparison to 2018/19. All executive members have remained in post and active. The appointment of one further member, Bel Crompton, was voted upon and agreed by the forum. Bel had previously sat on the executive while working for HomeStart Kennet and had also chaired the forum. Bel now joins us as an independent member, with an extensive background in local authority and voluntary sector organisations.

Tony Griffin of Tony Griffin Safeguarding Children Training has continued as chair. Tony is a retired Wiltshire Police Officer of 31 years experience. He spent 20 years investigating child abuse and neglect and managed the Child Abuse Investigation Team in Salisbury for five years. He is also qualified to teach adults and went on to lead, develop and deliver the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Children Training Programme for Wiltshire Safeguarding Children Board (WSCB).

The executive comprises:

Alabare Christian Care & Support	Vanessa Bedford
Barnardo's	Liz James
Community First	Dawn Whiting
HomeStart Kennet	Tania Rackham
Spurgeons (host organisation)	Russell Martin
Wessex Community Action	Amber Skyring
Wiltshire Wildlife Trust	Damian Haasjes
Independent	Bel Crompton

The new CFVFSF website has proved an excellent resource for the forum, funded by the CFVFSF executive and including a searchable member directory, together with social media and communication capabilities.

There are currently 69 organisations signed up as members to the forum, with another two organisations currently being processed. This includes the office of Wiltshire's Police and Crime Commissioner.

2) To enable CFVFSF representatives to participate fully in the FACT Programme (multi-agency and Wiltshire wide) and to contribute towards effective commissioning of services for children and families in Wiltshire.

During the year 19/20, the CFVFSF was represented at the FACT Board by the chair and at the FACT Front Door meeting by Liz James. Key messages were fed back to the forum, while the concerns and views of members were fed back into these bodies.

The CFVSF has been part of the FACT journey since its inception, and during the previous year hosted two visits from Jen Salter and Heather Lovelock to consult with the forum around the Integrated Earliest Support in the Community Strategy (IESIC) and other FACT related issues.

Following concerns being voiced by the executive and forum members that the CFVSF was being forgotten by the FACT programme, the chair led a fact finding session at the January 2020 meeting of the forum (the last to be held before lockdown), to ascertain the following:

- Individual organisational understanding of FACT
- How each member is involved
- What each organisation would like to know.

The chair was due to attend the FACT Board and give a further presentation about the group, presenting the findings of this session. Unfortunately, the meeting was cancelled owing to COVID-19, but the main themes were:

- Changes to sub-groups were not being explained or communicated clearly
- Members did not feel that local authority staff involved with FACT were sufficiently aware of the complexity of the voluntary sector, or how the CFVSF works to represent their voice
- A concern that not everyone was aware of the huge benefits involving the voluntary sector could achieve
- Concerns that families and young people were not being as involved with the reshaping of services and FACT programme as had originally been communicated.

These will be discussed with the FACT Board when it begins to meet again.

3) To ensure that forum members' voices are heard at a strategic level across the public sector and that they have an opportunity to influence and challenge decision making and service development.

See strategic meeting attendance above.

4) To ensure that engagement with the voluntary sector is meaningful, purposeful and impactful.

The CFVSF and its members were part of the work undertaken to create a single point of access role with the MASH team. This role eventually became a navigator position, and members of the executive took part in the first round of interviews. This position has now been filled and it is hoped that they will be able to attend future forum meetings.

At the end of the financial year 2018/19, the executive agreed to hold an amount of funding to support building the sector's ability to work with children and young people who are unaccompanied refugees and asylum seekers. The executive completed consultations with CFVSF members during 2019 to explore training and support which could be purchased and

delivered to increase the abilities and skills of organisations across Wiltshire. After a short tendering exercise the executive invited the following organisations to deliver:

- Tony Griffin Safeguarding Children - foundation and advanced safeguarding
- Wiltshire Council – young person’s mental health first aid
- Wessex Community Action - mental health at work.

Unfortunately, the COVID-19 lockdown prevented delivery of the first set of training and we are currently waiting to see when face to face training may be permissible.

5) To provide a mechanism for forum members to be consulted on key service changes and to continuously drive partnership working.

FACT involvement and attendance has been described above.

Mark Gurrey has attended from the Safeguarding Vulnerable People Partnership to update the forum on the work which has been undertaken to replace the WSCB and Children’s Trust. Members had the opportunity to feed in thoughts and concerns, and regularly discuss the materials and learning coming from the partnership.

Partnership working has been strengthened by the addition of Wessex Community Action to the executive meaning that communication between those in the voluntary sector working purely with families and children has improved by the addition of input from the Wiltshire organisation representing the wider voluntary sector remit.

6) To maintain good working practices for the CFVSF, in consultation with its members, including facilitating targeted and relevant meetings, networking events and training.

Forum meetings have been held on a bi-monthly basis and continue to provide an element of networking and sharing of best practice. All meetings have an element of learning around safeguarding delivered by the chair and has included:

- Serious case reviews – learning from the SVPP and from those organisations involved with the cases themselves also part of the forum
- New Wiltshire Thresholds Matrix – aimed at introducing organisations to the new matrix and its use
- Contextual safeguarding
- Regular reviews of national publications and reports.

The forum also asks guest speakers to attend the forum, with the most notable being the Wiltshire Police County Lines team. Officers attended to explain their work and how the forum agencies could help with identifying vulnerable service users who might be at risk of county lines and cuckooing.

Agencies attending this year have included:

Safeguarding Vulnerable People Partnership - chair

Family Counselling Trust
Wiltshire Council FACT
Children and families commissioning lead
Wiltshire Police

Work around training for the unaccompanied asylum seeking children agenda has been discussed in point four above.

7) To support children and families organisations in developing their knowledge and understanding of their role in relevant government initiatives and to keep children and young people safe.

The CFVSF continues in its commitment to continue working with the local authority to understand the provision of children's services (and to contribute towards to how they might be developed). This is supported by the CFVSF inviting strategic leaders to the forum meetings, with attendance already mentioned above.

As already described (see point two), the chair has continued to attend the FACT Board. We have continued to facilitate engagement with the SVPP, who have attended (as described in point five).

As described in point one above, Tony Griffin is now the chair of the forum having previously been an associate executive member leading on safeguarding. Tony has been able to use his considerable experience and knowledge to update forum members on key developments, both within the council and nationally. This also includes links to free training recommended by government and recognised child protection organisations.

Discussions within the meeting and during networking opportunities allows organisations to share information and best practice. Key messages are communicated to the sector via newsletter, speakers at meetings and the website to ensure agencies are informed and can co-operate to ensure the framework of multi-agency arrangements in Wiltshire is effective. The forum firmly upholds that we must work together to protect and safeguard children.

Conclusion

This has been year of consolidation and growth for the forum, having experience huge levels of change in 2018/19. Governance arrangements are strong with eight members forming an executive body and wider partnership arrangements are developing well. The focus is likely to be on supporting organisations into the 'new normal' of a post COVID-19 environment, important messages from the FACT programme board. In the current financial landscape operating within our budget and delivering value for money is a priority.

Areas for improvement/development are:

- increasing attendance at forum meetings (something which is already taking place)
- confirming representation on FACT sub-groups

- continuing to work to further improve partnerships and strengthen multi-agency working
- deliver training which strengthens the sector's ability to work with unaccompanied asylum seekers and refugees.