

Report to: Children's Services Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: 21 September 2015

By: Director of Children's Services

Title: THRIVE Programme Review

Purpose: To report on the outcomes and the review of the THRIVE programme at the end of the third and final year

RECOMMENDATIONS

1) To consider the end of programme report and the final programme review

1 Background

1.1 The THRIVE programme was established against a background of escalating demand and costs for Children's Social Care. The externally produced Outline Business Case (OBC) projected rising costs over the three year period and these have been avoided. The cost of Children's Social Care has decreased by £4.7m (8%) from £56.6m to £51.9m from 2011/12 to 2014/15 and the financial review has found evidence of the sustained impact of investment and change activities.

1.2 This report provides a summary of the achievement and the findings of the review of the three year programme, which has been overseen by a multi agency Executive Board, and the next steps to sustain progress. The final review of THRIVE was based on three key goals identified in the theory of change for the project as crucial to sustainability:

1. Skilled, confident and proactive workforce
2. Effective, targeted interventions with children and families across the continuum of need
3. Reduced demand for high cost services

2 Supporting information

Goal 1: Skilled, confident and proactive workforce

2.1 The evaluation of goal 1 looks at two areas, a Learning Needs Analysis (LNA) completed by Early Help teams and a survey of social care practitioners.

2.2 Over 80% of Early Help staff who completed the LNA rated themselves as confident in 6 out of 8 competency areas, and the confidence levels in all areas have increased since the first LNA in 2012.

Figure 1: Learning Needs Analysis - Early Help Confidence Levels

	2012	2015
Supervision and Managing Risk	76%	91%
Knowledge and understanding	88%	91%
Safeguarding, assessment, planning and managing risk	84%	88%
Effective communication, engagement and intervention	86%	91%
Confidence using intervention tools	20%	43%
Multi-agency and integrated working	80%	83%
Health and Wellbeing	67%	72%
Children and Young People's Development	79%	84%
Average	72%	80%
Average rise in confidence		8%

2.3 In all areas the rate of increase in confidence levels is greater in the group who received training than the group of respondents as a whole. There will be continued investment in workforce development to embed the THRIVE way of working and a range of delivery methods will be used to ensure, in the context of reducing budgets, that workforce development is delivered in the most cost effective way.

2.4 Research in Practice was commissioned to measure the impact of the Munro training programme (a national programme of social worker training and part of THRIVE), on staff skills, knowledge and confidence of the social work workforce. Two surveys were undertaken, a baseline survey in 2013 and a follow-up survey in 2014. The evidence shows that the training has had a positive impact on practice in East Sussex, and that the programme has led to increased levels of knowledge, skills and confidence in practitioners working with children and families.

2.5 A key theme from both surveys was the need for time and the opportunity to use the new learning in practice and for good reflective supervision to explore how learning acquired can be implemented in practice. In response to this the programme has been adjusted to re-inforce training.

Goal 2: Effective, targeted interventions with children and families across the continuum of need

2.6 In order to evaluate goal 2 we have undertaken a light touch review using our internal children's services evaluators, who had been trained as part of THRIVE, to undertake 10 family interviews with families who had been in receipt of Children's Centre early help keywork services and 4 interviews with Targeted Youth Support (TYS) clients. In addition we have used an external evaluation of intensive family keywork and service user feedback. Although some staff and partners have commented on the scaling back of lower level early help services the evidence suggests that in principle this goal is being met and the Keywork Service is having a positive impact on outcomes for children, young people and families.

2.7 The evaluation of the intensive family keywork programme found that the programme was sustainable with evidence that keyworkers have been able to engage with families in a structured and supportive way providing practical support to families, and evidence of the positive impact of the service on families and their appreciation of the support provided. The evaluation also identified areas for development to improve the impact of the services and outcomes for families, to provide consistency and clarity in approach and intervention.

2.8 Evidence from the additional 10 Children's Centre interviews suggests that the Keywork service delivers interventions valued by the families which empower the families to achieve positive outcomes and sustain them.

2.9 Service user feedback from 757 young people and parents/carers in 2013 and 2014 and the 4 TYS interviews are positive about the interaction with the TYS service demonstrating that the TYS service is consistently providing an effective service for young people. Whilst it is not possible to directly attribute this to the THRIVE programme, tools and techniques embedded through THRIVE have supported TYS keyworkers to provide effective targeted interventions.

Goal 3: Reduced demand for high cost services

2.10 The cost of Children's Social Care has decreased and the projected increase in demand and associated costs outlined in the OBC has been avoided. This has been achieved even against a back-drop of a reduced base budget as a result of Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) savings. Figure 2, page 14 of Appendix 1 shows the pre THRIVE trend of expenditure, actual spend and forecast spend for the next three financial years.

2.11 The dashboard in Appendix 1 (page 2) sets out our performance against key indicators. In summary there has been a reduction in the number of referrals, assessments, Child Protection (CP) Plans and care proceedings. More children receiving Early Help services and fewer of these children going on to receive further social work services within 12 months are further positive indicators.

2.12 The number of LAC has reduced to 548 from a high point of 620 at the start of THRIVE. Agency placements are being procured more effectively, for example by targeted negotiation with external providers, and children in agency placements are moving to less expensive in house options as circumstances for the young person change. This has been made possible by an

increase in the number of in house foster carers, and effective retention. Ongoing costs of LAC placements have also been reduced through extended family options, an increase in the number of adoption placements and continued focus on children moving to adopters in a timely way.

2.13 Within a context of an overall reduction in care proceedings, other savings have been generated by a reduction in the number and cost of supervised contacts, a reduction in the number of parent and baby foster care placements, and a reduction in externally commissioned expert assessments.

2.14 Through a combination of a reduction in demand, savings made and costs avoided we now have a more financially sustainable service. Key activities will continue and have been mainstreamed. Key investments will continue as business as usual and £1.2m from the budget has been reprioritised. This will continue to make the whole system more sustainable and avoid greater costs. We will continue to monitor relevant areas of performance, to develop financial models still further to help us monitor and forecast demand and costs as accurately as possible. We will also be looking actively for opportunities to trade services and generate income.

3. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

3.1 As a multi agency system we will build on our learning from THRIVE to embed what has worked so that we can achieve more with the diminishing resources available.

3.2 Overall it can be concluded that THRIVE has met the three goals set out in the theory of change and has safely and effectively reduced demand and as a result has both generated savings and avoided costs.

Stuart Gallimore
Director of Children's Services

Contact Officer: Liz Rugg, Assistant Director, Safeguarding, LAC and Youth Justice
Tel. No. 01273 481274
Email: liz.rugg@eastsussex.gov.uk

APPENDIX 1

Finance and performance review

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Available on request and in the Members room:

Summary of findings Thrive final programme review for Goal 1 and 2