

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2014-2015

**EDUCATION & LIFELONG LEARNING
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Date: 28th January 2015

**REPORT OF:
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND
LIFELONG LEARNING**

Agenda Item No. 5

**Delivery of the Save the Children
'Families and Schools Together'
(FAST) Programme in Rhondda
Cynon Taf County Borough**

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the implementation and delivery of the Save the Children, 'Families and Schools Together' (FAST) programme in schools and communities across the County Borough.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- 2.1 Note the information contained within this report.
- 2.2 Scrutinise and comment on the information provided.
- 2.3 Consider whether they wish to scrutinise in greater depth any matters contained in the report.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 FAST is an award winning parental engagement programme which was developed by Professor Lynn McDonald, Professor of Social Work Research at Middlesex University and is based on the socio-ecological theory of child development. The three core aims of the programme are to enable children to:

- Experience success in school and have stronger life chances because of improved educational achievement in reading, writing, maths, behaviour and better home-school relationships;
- Live in strengthened families because of improved parent-child bonds, communication and parental confidence;
- Live in stronger communities with increased trust, participation and reduced social isolation.

- 3.2 The FAST Pilot Projects in RCT were funded by the Save the Children charity through corporate sponsorship but staffing the projects at a local level is secured through a combination of staff time in schools, officers from the Local Authority, Health Professionals, Community Police and voluntary community members.
- 3.3 The programme was initially introduced in RCT by the Early Years Service and is co-ordinated by the three Team Around the Family and Canopi Co-ordinators. Data and local knowledge of the schools contexts was used to identify schools where this initiative could make the greatest impact. Priority is given to schools where there are high rates of free school meals pupils. These schools have mainly been in Communities First areas, however there have been exceptions where neighbouring primary schools have closed and FAST has been used as a mechanism to engage parents and children into the new primary school setting.
- 3.4 The FAST programme relies heavily on the commitment of headteachers, involvement of delivery partners and parents/carers/ extended family members with the importance of triangulation (home, school and community) being of vital importance in ensuring its success. Delivery partners have come from a broad range of organisation: Communities First; Early Years and Family Support Service (RCTCBC) including Flying Start, Play Service and the Family Information Service; Valleys Kids; Action for Children; Church representatives; health professionals, Catering Direct and Community Policing to name but a few.
- 3.5 School partners are essential to the delivery of the programme and those members of staff who work in the school setting, such as teachers, teaching assistants, school nurses, lunch time supervisors, school cooks have readily supported the delivery of FAST. Some of the schools who have embraced the FAST programme have received Estyn inspections and FAST was judged to be sector leading practice. Two of the Headteachers have been invited to share their practices in National Conferences by Save the Children.

4. HOW IT WORKS

- 4.1 The FAST programme runs for one afternoon per week and is delivered directly after the school day for 8 weeks. All families participating must have at least one child aged between 3–8 years old attending the school. The whole family are invited to attend; mothers, fathers, grandparents, aunts and uncles, making it an intergenerational programme. During each weekly session, children and parents take part in activities designed to improve children's outcomes and wellbeing, such as eating a family meal together, family play, learning and communication activities, one to one parent-child dedicated support, community building and parent to parent time. After 'graduating' from the programme, parents continue to meet on a monthly basis. This maintains the relationships and gains from participating in the programme.

5. CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

The critical success factors for FAST are:

- Headteacher and school staff commitment;
- Identification of partners to ensure ‘triangulation’;
- Synchronised roll out of programmes to ensure partner participation;
- Understanding by all parties involved that FAST is a catalyst for future development and progress of parents, families, children, the school and the community;
- Funding for the programme;
- Effective local monitoring and evaluation to ensure impact can be measured.

6. CURRENT POSITION

Below is a table of the schools that have participated in the FAST programme. Retention rates for programmes continue to be high.

School:	Rhondda /Cynon/Taf:	Date:	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	No. children:	No. families:	Retention rate:
Perthcelyn	Cynon	Spring 12 Spring 13	✓	✓	44 23	18 11	75% 100%
Cefn & Craig y Hesg	Taf	Autumn 12	✓		40	22	92%
Miskin	Cynon	Autumn 12 Spring 13	✓	✓	44 52	25 26	86% 100%
Ynyscynon	Rhondda	Autumn 12 Autumn 13	✓	✓	15 33	11 11	85% 100%
Llwynceilyn	Rhondda	Spring 13	✓		33	16	84%
Penpych	Rhondda	Spring 13	✓		43	24	89%
Glenboi	Cynon	Autumn 14	✓		52	26	84%
Capcoch	Cynon	Autumn 13	✓		24	12	86%
Llyn y Forwyn	Rhondda	Autumn 13	✓		43	23	92%
Tylorstown	Rhondda	Spring 14	✓		54	28	100%
Treorchy	Rhondda	Summer 14	✓		56	28	97%
Darran Park	Rhondda	Autumn 14	✓				
Penyreglyn	Rhondda	Autumn 14	✓				
Penywaun	Cynon	Autumn 14	✓				
Totals:			14	3	556	281	90.5 %

A further two programmes are planned for the Spring Term 2015: Trerobart (Taf) and Glenboi (Cynon).

7. WAY FORWARD

- 7.1 Save the Children have confirmed that they have lost their corporate sponsorships for the Programme and will be looking to charge a fee for each programme.
- 7.2 Analysis of verified local data is currently being undertaken to measure the impact on attendance levels although it is acknowledged that any improvement in the levels of attainment of learners is longer term and will be tracked over a period of time.

8. CONCLUSION

Members are asked to accept this report as a position statement on the delivery of the FAST programme up to December 2014.