

Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)

Informing our approach to fairness

Proposal: Review and deletion of Intensive Family Intervention Team

Date of assessment: November 2023

Lead Officer: Warren Petitjean

Assessment team: Warren Petitjean

Portfolio: Growing City

Version: 1

Planned review date: January 2024

Section A: Current service

1. What does the service / function / policy do?

The Intensive Family Intervention Team (IFIT) was developed in 2019 following the closure of Phillipson Street Children's Home. All staff within IFIT were former residential workers within Phillipson Street and are experienced in working with adolescents.

The Team is structured with a full-time Team Manager (N10) and nine full-time Outreach Workers (N6). The Team works a shift pattern from 8am until 10pm, seven days a week with the exception of Bank Holidays. The service operates from two community bases hubs in Slatyford and Gosforth.

The scope of the service is to work with families where a child or children are at risk of them being admitted into local authority care; families who are in crisis and there is a risk of care and children who are already in local authority care whose placement is at risk of breakdown and or there is a plan for a child in care to be reunified to their family.

The initial scope of the service was to work children of all ages, but it was anticipated IFIT would predominantly work with adolescents. The service provides support to all social work teams across Children's Social Care including the Emergency Duty Team; these are a combination of planned intervention and also emergency intervention.

The aim of the service is to provide tangible help and support and direct work to children in a neutral venue outside of the family home. Areas of work to be completed are identified by the allocated social worker and the Team use trauma informed, restorative, solution focused and strength-based approaches to work with families. The Team Manager provides support and reflective individual and group supervision in line with the intensive whole family model that is used in interventions with young people.

2. Who do we deliver this service / function / policy for?

IFIT work with families where there is a risk of children being brought into local authority care. The aim is to prevent children being brought into care and support children living safely within the family home.

IFIT also support Children's Social Care with non-statutory visits to children and families. For example, they are able to work on an evening and on a weekend to monitor the implementation of Safety Plans and complete welfare checks on families and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. They also take children out on activity-based sessions in the community and complete one to one work with children which includes, cooking and games.

It is difficult to gauge how many families IFIT work with in a given period as the reporting of data has not been established since IFIT was set up.

3. Why do we deliver this service / function / policy?

IFIT is not a statutory service, however, it does compliment the statutory work of Children's Social Care and supports us in fulfilling our statutory obligation to provide support to children and families under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989.

The aim of IFIT is to reduce the need for children being placed outside of the family home and subsequently reduce the cost of alternative care placements such as foster care and residential care.

4. How much do we currently spend on this service / function / policy?

Gross expenditure: £ 447,890

Gross income: £0

Net budget: £ 447,890

Comments: Not applicable.

5. How many people do we employ to deliver this service / function / policy?

Number of posts: 10

Number of full-time equivalent officers: 10

Comments: Staffing within IFIT are all full-time; with one Outreach Manager (N10) and nine Outreach Workers (N6).

Section B: Proposal for future service

1. How do we proposed to change the service / function / policy?

It is proposed the IFIT Team is deleted.

As set out in the evidence section below, an audit was completed due to the lack of available data to evidence the impact of IFIT on safely reducing the number of children in local authority care. The audit did not find any evidence of IFIT having a sustainable impact.

2. What evidence have we used to inform this proposal?

Gathering data relating to the number of referrals and the impact of IFIT has proved to be a challenge; there is no data easily accessible to understand who IFIT work with or whether IFIT achieves the intended outcomes of keeping children safely at home and improving outcomes for children. A case file audit tool was therefore developed in collaboration with the Principal Social Worker and applied to ten children and families who had involvement and support from IFIT. Focus was placed on whether IFIT support had any impact on reducing the risk of a child being accommodated by the local authority, whether IFIT reduced escalation of risk and the approach and model of intervention used with the family.

Overall, there is some positive aspects to IFIT involvement with families. They are able to have regular contact with parents and complete direct work with children and respond to crisis situations for both daytime services and out of hours when needed.

Over the past three years, IFIT has become a well-used resource which has afforded Children's Social Care the ability to provide some perceived support and contact to families where social workers do not generally have the capacity to provide the level of contact. It is questionable whether the support provided by IFIT could have been provided by a Family Support Worker or a Child and Family Worker.

There is evidence of some positive relationships being developed with children and parents which promotes engagement with services and parents appear to use the resource as an opportunity to update professionals with any concerning events. Despite this, however, there appears to be an over focus on activity-based work with children and an individual focus on children being responsible for their behavioural needs and making changes themselves.

IFIT can respond to crises and have been beneficial in terms of providing emergency support when there is an acute risk of a child being brought into local authority care. However, the approach taken appears to be more of an emotional support to parents and by engaging the child in activities outside the home provides some respite and diffusion of crisis situations. Whilst this may support and prevent escalation in the immediacy, there is limited evidence to suggest that IFIT are effective in reducing the concerns, needs and risks which will reduce the risk of children being placed in local authority care in the medium to long-term.

In addition, the use of IFIT is extremely broad and although there are some liberal criteria detailed, they have been used as a stopgap when additional oversight is needed, for example the monitoring of welfare of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and checking the adherence of Safety Plans.

3. What will be the financial impact of this proposal?

The proposal will see savings of approximately £447,890 from the deletion of the IFIT Team.

4. What will be the impact upon our employees of this proposal?

Number of FTE: 10 FTE

% of workforce: 1.89% of CSC staff; 0.18% of NCC.

Comments: The staff will be redeployed into current staffing vacancies across Children's Social Care which will provide suitable alternative opportunities.

Section C: Consultation

1. Who did we engage with to develop this proposal?

Who we have engaged with to develop this proposal: Children's Social Care Leadership Team, Children, Education and Skills Leadership Team

When / how: August to November

Main issues raised: None.

2. Who do we want / need to engage with during consultation?

Who want to engage with during consultation: IFIT Staff, wider Children's Social Care workforce.

When / how: The IFIT Team will be provided with a presentation of the proposals and the rationale for the proposal being made. The wider Children's Social Care workforce will be informed after the staff directly affected and will be invited to share their views of the proposal. Broader consultation will take place through the council-wide Let's Talk budget consultation.

3. Who provided feedback during the consultation process? (to be completed post-consultation)

Who provided feedback in the consultation process (to be completed post-consultation): to be completed post-consultation.

When / how: to be completed post-consultation.

Main issues raised: to be completed post-consultation.

Section D: Impact assessment

The section below sets out actual or potential disadvantages or benefits that may arise from implementing this proposal. This assessment is set out for people with characteristics protected by the Equality Act 2010 and other broader areas of potential impact.

People with protected characteristics

Age

Type of impact: Potential disadvantage.

Detail of impact: IFIT work on a one to one basis with children and young people, offering them the opportunity to complete direct work and share their lived experience. Children engage in work with the IFIT Worker to share their experiences and complete work aimed to reduce the risk of them being brought into local authority care. If the IFIT team is removed, this work could continue to be completed by the allocated Social Worker to ensure children's views are heard and actioned where appropriate.

How will this be addressed or mitigated?: Social Worker will continue to work on a one to one basis with children and will be supported by Family Support Workers and Child and Family Workers.

Disability

Type of impact: Potential benefit.

Detail of impact: The proposal seeks to delete the IFIT Team and redeploy staff in existing vacancies across Children's Social Care who work with a range of service users of varying characteristics. There is limited evidence IFIT has any impact on reducing the number of children in care and reducing budget pressures. If agreed, the proposal will redeploy staff to support the delivery of social care services across the city.

How will this be addressed or mitigated?: Not applicable.

Gender reassignment

Type of impact: None.

Detail of impact: Not applicable.

How will this be addressed or mitigated?: Not applicable.

Sex

Type of impact: None.

Detail of impact: Not applicable.

How will this be addressed or mitigated?: Not applicable.

Marriage and civil partnership

Type of impact: None.

Detail of impact: Not applicable.

How will this be addressed or mitigated?: Not applicable.

Pregnancy and maternity

Type of impact: None.

Detail of impact: Not applicable.

How will this be addressed or mitigated?: Not applicable.

Race and ethnicity

Type of impact: None.

Detail of impact: Not applicable.

How will this be addressed or mitigated?: Not applicable.

Religion and belief

Type of impact: None.

Detail of impact: Not applicable.

How will this be addressed or mitigated?: Not applicable.

Sexual orientation

Type of impact: None.

Detail of impact: Not applicable.

How will this be addressed or mitigated?: Not applicable.

Other potential impacts

Unpaid carers

Type of impact: Potential benefit.

Detail of impact: The proposal seeks to delete the IFIT Team and redeploy staff in existing vacancies across Children's Social Care who work with a range of service users of varying

characteristics. There is limited evidence IFIT has any impact on reducing the number of Children in Care and reducing budget pressures. If agreed, the proposal will redeploy staff to support the delivery of children's social care services across the city which will benefit the experiences of young carers and their families receiving targeted support.

How will this be addressed or mitigated?: Not applicable.

People vulnerable to socio-economic impacts

Type of impact: Potential benefit.

Detail of impact: The proposal seeks to delete the IFIT Team and redeploy staff in existing vacancies across Children's Social Care who work with a range of service users of varying characteristics. There is limited evidence IFIT has any impact on reducing the number of Children in Care and reducing budget pressures. If agreed, the proposal will redeploy staff to support the delivery of social care services across the city which will benefit the experiences of those people vulnerable to socio-economic issues receiving targeted support.

How will this be addressed or mitigated?: Not applicable.

Businesses

Type of impact: None.

Detail of impact: Not applicable.

How will this be addressed or mitigated?: Not applicable.

Geography

Type of impact: None.

Detail of impact: Not applicable.

How will this be addressed or mitigated?: Not applicable.

Community cohesion

Type of impact: None.

Detail of impact: Not applicable.

How will this be addressed or mitigated?: Not applicable.

Community safety

Type of impact: None.

Detail of impact: Not applicable.

How will this be addressed or mitigated?: Not applicable.

Public Health

Type of impact: None.

Detail of impact: Not applicable.

How will this be addressed or mitigated?: Not applicable.

Climate

Type of impact: None.

Detail of impact: Not applicable.

How will this be addressed or mitigated?: Not applicable.