

## Record of operational decision

<b>Decision title:</b>	Mental Health & Awareness Scheme: Qwell Online Toolkit and Solihull Approach
<b>Date of decision:</b>	13 <sup>th</sup> September 2021
<b>Decision maker:</b>	Director of Adults & Communities
<b>Authority for delegated decision:</b>	<p>Decision taken by Cabinet to approve the COVID 19 Recovery Plan on 24 June 2021: That authority be delegated to the Director of Economy and Place, Director Adults and Communities, Director Children and Families and Director of Public Health be authorised to take all operational decisions to implement recommendation including, but not limited to, the procurement and commissioning of the identified projects (as set out in the detailed action plan)</p> <p><a href="http://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/ieIssueDetails.aspx?IId=50037702&amp;PlanId=0&amp;Opt=3#A158109">http://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/ieIssueDetails.aspx?IId=50037702&amp;PlanId=0&amp;Opt=3#A158109</a></p>
<b>Ward:</b>	Countywide
<b>Consultation:</b>	<p>The COVID Recovery Plan was approved by Cabinet on 24 June 2021 which provides funding of £6m to support economy, community wellbeing and organisational recovery. The plan provided an overview of the schemes for delivery, which included the “Mental Health &amp; awareness” scheme and all appropriate consultation was undertaken at this time.</p> <p>The Section 151 Officer has been consulted and supportive of the project.</p>
<b>Decision made:</b>	<p>Kooth Digital Health Limited have been commissioned to provide Qwell, an online toolkit which provides access to low level interactive support aimed at over 18’s. This will be a 1 year subscription. The Qwell platform provides:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A drop-in chat function for service users to speak to a readily available counsellor.</li> <li>• A 24-hour messaging function for service users to contact the counselling team.</li> <li>• A function allowing the pre-booking of counselling sessions with a named counsellor on a regular basis.</li> <li>• A wide range of forums, all of which are pre-moderated, offering facilitated peer support for service users. These forums often provide the crucial first steps towards getting further therapeutic support.</li> <li>• An online magazine with full content moderation, creation and editing, which encourages service users to share their stories or write articles, all of which is pre-moderated. Information, activities and self-care resources readily available for service users to download.</li> </ul> <p>This is a direct award to Kooth Digital Health Limited. A waiver has been granted under the Council’s contract procedure rules.</p>

**Solihull Parenting Scheme**  
**Funding to extend the existing Solihull Parenting Scheme in Herefordshire.**

The Solihull training programme will address the emerging mental health needs of children and parents arising from the pandemic. The training allows opportunities for parents, schools and professionals to gain understanding and skills to help them manage children’s behaviours and anxieties. Increased marketing, resources and publicity around the benefits of the Solihull on line parenting programme especially supporting parents who are supporting children’s mental health anxieties following the pandemic with a key focus on targeting high schools. Training workshops for staff/volunteers working with children, young people and families to promote/support the online parenting courses for those who have experienced increased anxieties post covid.

**Particular features of the Solihull Approach are:**

- **Workforce development:** increasing skills and knowledge, consistency a and shared language across agencies
- **Early intervention and prevention** in the early years, as well as across childhood and into adolescence
- **Teambuilding** within and across agencies eg children’s centre services, maternity units, school - from receptionists to support staff to teachers
- **Parenting programmes** from conception through to adolescence, both face to face and online.
- A particular emphasis on **including fathers**
- **Online parenting** modules – increasing accessibility to learning.
- **A theoretical framework**

This is a direct award to Solihull Approach. A waiver has been granted under the Council’s contract procedure rules.

**Reasons for decision:**

The global Covid-19 pandemic and the resulting measures taken to reduce the spread of the virus have had an unprecedented impact on the national and local economy and on people’s wellbeing and mental health. We have seen large increase in the numbers of people accessing their GP, and mental health crisis services, suffering with severe anxiety, stress and depression. The online service that will be provided by Qwell will provide immediate access to support people, providing a drop in chat function, 24 hour chat facility with the counselling team, the ability to book sessions with a named counsellor as well as other support, guidance and signposting for people with low level or developing mental health needs, or to support people who may be concerned about or caring for others.

Perinatal mental health problems affect up to 20% of woman during pregnancy and the first year of having a baby. Due to the pandemic and lockdown, parents with new babies have not been able to socialise or be supported by universal groups in person. Multi-agency training to encourage consistency in understanding and approach re emotional health, wellbeing and relationships across frontline staff working with families, children and young people is key. Parent/carer/ infant early healthy relationship building improves overall family health and wellbeing.

	<p>The Solihull Approach is recognised and utilised in Herefordshire, particularly in relation to the under-5s: training in additional modules on mental health and wellbeing and understanding the teenage brain will extend its reach to families with teenagers, schools and the wider community.</p>
<p><b>Highlight any associated risks/finance/legal/equality considerations:</b></p>	<p>The COVID recovery plan budget allocation must be committed within the 2021/22 financial year.</p> <p><u>Kooth Digital Health Limited</u></p> <p>The contract to provide the Qwell service will be for 12 months and the full cost of that provision will be covered by funds from the Covid Recovery Grant.</p> <p>There were some concerns about the Qwell service operating in isolation away from existing mental health services, however they will provide an extensive signposting element, that the council will be able to bolster with direct contact information for local mental health and crisis services, and links to other locally based support networks, such MIND.</p> <p>The Qwell offer has been discussed with our legal services and they have not raised any concerns about this award.</p> <p><u>Solihull Approach</u></p> <p>There are some concerns associated with getting children’s social care to access the training due to the challenges staff are under and high turnover of staff. However the training is supporting many other professionals that work with children and families so we see this as low risk.</p>
<p><b>Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:</b></p>	<p><u>Kooth Digital Health Limited</u></p> <p>There is no similar service currently available and provided by a Herefordshire based organisation. Whereas some organisations, such as the Samaritans provide an online service, it is very different to this proposal.</p> <p>There are smaller nationally available online mental health support services, but given the time constraints we are working within, the council could not be assured of one of these services being able to put in place a similarly robust service as that being provided by Kooth Digital Health Limited. The council also has the reassurance of knowing that they have been providing their online service for children and young adults across Herefordshire for a number of years (commissioned by Herefordshire CCG). Therefore we have some assurances of the quality and capacity of the service to be provided.</p> <p><u>Solihull Approach</u></p> <p>For the Solihull parenting programme of works this is the main parenting programme approach used in Herefordshire by professionals working with children and families for many years. It is a nationally established and well recognised approach to parenting support and well known to early year’s workers, health, family support workers, children centre services workers etc. It was not considered appropriate to purchase another parenting training package for the county when the Solihull programme has been embedded in the county and used by all partners across health, education and social care and is evidence based.</p>

<b>Details of any declarations of interest made:</b>	None
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I am an officer delegated to make the decision

Signed:

Print Name: Paul Smith

Job Title: Interim Director for Adults & Communities