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**EARLY HELP SERVICES – MTFP TARGETS**

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**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Purpose of the Report**

1. This report is submitted to the Young People and Children Scrutiny Committee to provide an overview of the progress on the MTFP proposals to review the Early Help Services to ensure that the MTFP targets are met with a view to continuing to offer an Early Help offer that meets the needs of the families and young people of Darlington.

**Background**

2. The Council's current financial position has required that services be reviewed in response to the financial challenge. Children's Services have commenced a programme of service transformation. This piece of work is seeking to remodel the Early Help work by working with partner agencies.

**Recommendation**

3. Scrutiny is asked to note the progress made to date and savings achieved.

**Suzanne Joyner  
Director of Children and Adults Services**

**Background Papers**

Mid term financial plan papers – approved by Cabinet on 22 June 2016 and Council on 29 June 2016

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S17 Crime and Disorder	There are no implications arising from this report
Health and Well Being	To keep the Children and Young People Scrutiny informed of the remodelling of the Early Help Service
Carbon Impact	There are no carbon impact implications
Diversity	There are no implications arising from this report
Wards Affected	All Wards
Groups Affected	Children and young people aged 0-19 and their families, children and young people with additional needs
Budget and Policy Framework	This supports the MTFP by reducing the costs to the Council by a reduction in the Early Help service
Key Decision	No
Urgent Decision	No
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	The report should also be shared with One Darlington: Perfectly Placed to keep them informed of the Early Help work
Efficiency	To ensure the Early Help Service runs within the budget envelope

## MAIN REPORT

### Background

4. Early Help services were identified for review as they form a key part of the Children's Services Transformation and have strategic importance due to their potential for improving outcomes for children and young people while reducing costs of services in other areas.
5. It was proposed that there is a realignment of all the Early help services including Children Centres, Early Intervention Locality Teams(Early Help staff), the Specialist Family Support teams into a service under a single management structure to ensure efficiency of services and that families are offered support at the right time in their lives from the most appropriate professional.
6. The aim of the proposed service is to prevent the escalation of needs to limit the demand on acute services including social care and to ensure that children who can be maintained with the family can do so with support that improves the outcomes for the children.

### Progress to Date

7. The realigning of the Head of Service management structure was completed in August 2016 with the Head of First Contact and Localities assuming responsibility for the Children Access Point, the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub, the Locality Teams, Children Centres, families Information Service, YOS and ASB, it is anticipated that the 0-3 service will be included in this portfolio once the remodelling is complete.
8. During July to September, consultation sessions have been held with staff and partners from both the statutory and voluntary sector including schools. In total 73 persons attendance and 603 comments have been received, the focus of the sessions were:
  - a) what worked well
  - b) what would partners like to see changed
  - c) and how could partners contribute to the new model
9. However, it was felt that the voice of the schools was not well represented in the consultation sessions, therefore a questionnaire has been circulated to all Headteachers and designated safeguarding leads to gather any further views. The comments are currently being collated and analysed to identify recurring themes.
10. It is intended to elicit the views of the staff, partners and service users when the model is fully developed. The Children Centre model will require public consultation as defined in the statutory guidance for children centres should there be major changes to the children centre delivery model for Darlington.

11. Early sight of the comments gained through consultation identify a need to reduce the number of different teams that deliver services within the Council, that services should not be based in localities as this limits the effectiveness and consistency of approach. There is no agreed common assessment tool that is used and the use of a variety of data recording systems makes it difficult to analyse impact. It is also acknowledged that the current strategy which is dated until 2017 should become a strategy that is written and owned by partners.
12. In order to ensure the strategy is fit for purpose an Early Help Reference Group is to be established to review the strategy and undertake the necessary revisions to ensure all partner organisations are signed up to the new document. The timescale for completion of this task is November 2016.
13. In respect of a staffing model for the whole service a proposed structure is in its final stages of being completed, this will take into account the issue of small teams delivering elements of early help and will seek efficiencies by bringing together teams which carry out common tasks. The Children Centre model of a Hub and spoke model is progressing and the identification of suitable Town Centre premises is under consideration. A final model will be presented to Senior Management Team by end of October 2016, to ensure that further consultation can take place with staff, partners and services users and the service can become operational from April 2017.
14. An Early Help Co-ordinator has been appointed and commenced employment in June 2016. The focus of the work has been in seeking a common assessment tool that could be used across the whole of Early Help both within the proposed Council model but also by partners. The assessment form has been devised involving school partners given they are the largest partner agency who use this assessment tool. To support the development of Early Help services an audit of existing assessments has been undertaken which highlighted the need for additional training; the package has been developed and has been offered to all agencies from October 2016.
15. The introduction of the Liquid Logic system as a case management tool has provided an opportunity for an Early Help module to be developed which will give a single recording system for case work by the early help teams which will improve the ability to analyse the work undertaken and its effectiveness. The system will be operational for all staff during October 2016, and the facility of an electronic Early Help Assessment form for all partners will be available in April 2016.
16. The project is on time to deliver its 2016/2017 savings target of £170,000 and indications are that the 2017/2018 savings of £700,000 will also be achieved. The targets will be achieved by the realignment of services, the reduction in staffing numbers and effective use of skills across teams.