
EARLY HELP

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To inform Scrutiny of the progress of the Early Help redesign following the MTFP approval.

Summary

2. The report outlines the delivery model which is focused on families with additional needs below the threshold for statutory intervention from Children's Services. The aim is to reduce the demand on statutory services providing families with necessary and timely services to meet their needs. A multi-disciplinary approach focused on family need as identified via an Early Help Assessment.

Recommendations

3. It is recommended that Scrutiny note the report and receive further updates as the model is finalised and becomes operational.

Reasons

4. To give Scrutiny the opportunity to be involved in the development of the model.

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S17 Crime and Disorder	There are no issues this report needs to address.
Health and Well Being	Increased engagement for children and families in the receiving of timely services
Carbon Impact	There are no issues this report needs to address.
Diversity	There are no issues this report needs to address.
Wards Affected	This report does not impact on a particular ward, but Darlington as a whole.
Groups Affected	Children and families in Darlington
Budget and Policy Framework	This report does not represent a change to the budget and policy framework.
Key Decision	This is not a key decision.
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	Children receiving the best start in life
Efficiency	This report does not identify any efficiency savings.

MAIN REPORT

What will the service deliver on?

5. The service will undertake work with families where a child has additional needs which are currently not being met and requires multi-disciplinary/agency input, which will involve a lead professional and a team around the child approach. The service will also work with children on the 'Edge of Care', where there is a risk of imminent need for care or those who are returning to their family home after a period of care.
6. The work with families will be focused on:
 - (a) Maintaining school attendance
 - (b) Supporting the most vulnerable young people who are at risk of becoming NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training)
7. The service will work with families where there are:
 - (a) Parental mental health issues
 - (b) Parental substance misuse
 - (c) Domestic Abuse
 - (d) Neglect

- (e) Multiple and complex needs
 - (f) Compromised parenting which may necessitate the child to become looked after.
8. The service requirements are:
- (a) To undertake case work with those children, young people and their families who are defined as having additional needs.
 - (b) To undertake bespoke time limited pieces of work with families who are subject to a Child in Need or Child Protection Plan.
 - (c) All referrals into the service will be through the Children's Access Point or will be stepped down from social care.
 - (d) The service will keep the child at the centre of its planning.
 - (e) Adopt a whole family approach considering the family as a whole and its impact on the child.
 - (f) Adopt a multi skilled approach to addressing needs.
 - (g) Ensure each child has an individual assessment using the Early Help Assessment process.
 - (h) Ensure that staff are working to an agreed plan with measureable outcomes.
 - (i) Regular reviewing of the child's situation to ensure service continuing to meet the needs of the child, are services still required through a team around the child approach.
 - (j) Provide a flexible and responsive service, which may involve working outside of normal core hours.
9. The support and interventions offered to children, young people and their families will include:
- (a) Family Casework looking at relationships.
 - (b) Family dynamics, roles and responsibilities, self-esteem and motivation to change and family resilience.
 - (c) Maintaining children and young people within the family including attachment, care and boundaries support.
 - (d) Parenting support via 1 to 1 and group work.
 - (e) Support for parents with mental health and substance misuse issues which will require close working with Adult Services to ensure a co-ordinated

approach to families.

- (f) Direct work with young people including 1 to 1 work or group work.
- (g) Education support school attendance, behaviour, parental engagement with schools, school readiness.
- (h) Ensuring employment of young people and adults within the family.
- (i) Managing risky behaviours keeping children safe, engagement in positive activities.

Actions to Date

10. The Head of First Contact and Localities assumed responsibility for the Children Access Point, Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub, the Locality Teams, Children Centres, Families Information Service, Youth Offending Service and Anti-Social Behaviour in August 2016. The 0-3 service will be included in this portfolio once the remodelling of early help services is complete.
11. During July to September 2016, consultation sessions were held with staff, parents and partners from both the statutory and voluntary sector, including schools. The focus of the sessions included what worked well, what would partners like to see changed and how partners could contribute to the new model. A questionnaire was circulated to schools to ensure as many views as possible were gained. In total 73 persons were in attendance for the consultation sessions and 603 comments were received.
12. The feedback identified:
 - (a) A need to reduce the number of different teams that deliver services within the Council as this caused confusion for both partners and families which would also reduce the number of times a family “tells its story”.
 - (b) Services should not be based in localities as this limits the effectiveness and consistency of approach.
 - (c) There was no agreed common assessment tool that was used and the use of a variety of data recording systems made it difficult to analyse impact.
 - (d) It was also acknowledged that the current strategy which is dated until 2017 should become a strategy that is written and owned by partners.
13. The Early Help offer in Darlington will not be restricted to the Local Authority and, to ensure the Strategy is multi agency in recognising the role of all partners both statutory and voluntary, an Early Help Reference Group has been established. The group will review the Strategy, undertake necessary revisions and ensure all partner organisations are signed up to delivering Early Help to the families of Darlington. The Strategy is to be taken to the reference group in January 2017 for consideration. The Children Centre delivery via a Hub and Spoke Model is being proposed and work is

ongoing to secure the model within schools so that consultation can commence in February 2017 as required by statute.

14. 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 Council and its Partners. The development of the assessment form has been done with the inclusion of schools, given that they are the largest partner agency who will 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 case management system as a case management tool has provided an opportunity for an Early Help module to be developed to ensure a single recording system for case work by the Early Help teams. This will improve the ability to analyse work undertaken and its effectiveness. The system has become operational for staff during October 2016, and the facility of an electronic Early Help Assessment form for all partners will be available in April 2017.
16. The associated performance report is being finalised and is to be presented to Senior Managers in January 2017. This will provide the baseline for data to inform benchmarking and target setting from April 2017, and will then be included in the standard quarterly performance reports to Scrutiny.
17. Staff consultation for employment implementation on the new model commences in January 2017.
18. 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.