

SERVICES FOR FAMILIES WITH DISABLED CHILDREN AGED 0-3 YEARS

FINAL REPORT

Introduction

1. This is the final report of the Services for Families of Disabled Children aged 0-3 years (0-3 service) Review Group, established by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee to examine the provision of services for families with children with disabilities aged 0-3 years following removal of the Early Support Service (part of the Life Stages 0-25 Team) as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan budget cuts in June 2016.

Background Information

2. At a meeting of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee held on 12 September 2016 it was agreed to establish a Review Group and the first meeting of the Review Group was held on 12 December 2016.
3. A wide number of issues have been considered and discussed at the meetings and these are referred to in the notes attached (**Appendix 1**). This report describes the outcome of the Review Group, it summarises the work undertaken, the findings from the processes and the subsequent recommendations.
4. A draft Terms of Reference (**Appendix 2**) in relation to this piece of work was developed and approved by Children and Young People Scrutiny and all Members of the Scrutiny Committee were invited to participate in the Review.

Terms of Reference

5. The Terms of Reference were agreed at the first meeting of the Review Group held on 12 December 2016. These were:-
 - (a) To test the effectiveness of the service;
 - (b) Consult with stakeholders;
 - (c) To examine the duties and functions of the local authority as part of the Children Act 1989; and
 - (d) To examine the duty on the local authority as set out in the Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011.

The Group was led by Councillor Chris Taylor.

Acknowledgements

7. The Review Group acknowledges the support and assistance provided in the course of their investigations and would like to place on record its thanks to the following :-

Yvonne Coates, Head of First Contact and Locality Services;
Clare Orr, Senior Early Support Co-ordinator;
Avril Bissell, Early Support Co-ordinator;
Dr Jemma Dobson, Community Paediatrician;
Dr Anne Kelly, Community Paediatrician;

Methods of Investigation

8. The Review Group met on three occasions between December 2016 and February 2017 and the notes containing the discussions held at those meetings are attached (**Appendix 1**).
9. Members also met with families who access the 0-3 service and have children with disabilities in the specific 0-3 years age group; and also Early Support Service key stakeholders.

Findings

10. The initial findings of the Review Group indicates that :
- (a) The Children Act 1989 sets out a legal duty on the local authority to assess and review the care and support needs of disabled children and their carers and to work with local agencies to promote early help for children and young people who require additional support and to promote the upbringing of such children by their families.
 - (b) The Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011, which came into force on 1st April 2011 sets out a legal duty on the local authority to support disabled children and young adults, and their parents/carers, through the provision of short break support.
 - (c) This authority supports disabled children and young adults aged 0-17 through the Life Stages Service Short Breaks Statement; however it is generally expected that children aged 0-4 will not require any paid services to meet their needs, as all children of this age would need a high level of input from their parents or carers. Only in exceptional circumstances will paid services for children of this age be considered.

- (d) The Care Act 2014 states that local authorities must carry out transition assessments for those who will be likely to have needs for care and support, when moving from children's to adults services.
- (e) The Head of First Contact and Locality Services was tasked with examining the whole 0-19 sector, including 0-3 with a view to developing a single co-ordinated Early Help Service targeted at the most vulnerable children.
- (f) The proposed new service will consolidate the two current services of Children's Centres and co-located multi-disciplinary teams know as Early Intervention Teams into one Early Help model. This will also include Specialist Family Support Teams. The new service is due to launch on 1st April, 2017.
- (g) There are currently 2.4 persons on a team delivering services to 35 families with children with severe disabilities.
- (h) We examined data on the number of families offered a service per year and the number of families who took up the service, the number of families allocated a social worker and the source of the referral; the level of service those families are accessing and the range of disabilities of these children.
- (i) The small team operating the Early Support Service for 0-3 year olds are informed by the Maternity Team at the Darlington Memorial Hospital of potential families in need of the service so that families themselves do not have to seek out the service at a vulnerable time in their lives.
- (j) After speaking with some families who access the Early Support Service we were advised that because the team is small, families are able to have a relationship with one person so that there is always continuity.
- (k) We also learnt from the families we spoke with that communication between members of the team and the parents is excellent and in the event of regular contact being unavailable, another member of the team is able to stand in without needing to be briefed.
- (l) Families also feel that they can contact the Early Support Co-ordinators to receive advise and help whenever they need it.
- (m) The Community Paediatricians see young children with complex, mostly life long needs and agreed that the 0-3 service provided valuable continual support which they as health professionals were unable to provide. They also confirmed that the 0-3 service was able to offer specific direct advice to families, including specialist expertise on complex development needs of these children.

Conclusion

11. From our discussions with the parents and families of disabled children aged 0-3 years who currently access the Early Support Service and with the various stakeholders, we conclude that such positive intervention at this early stage is imperative and is more likely to lessen the need for more complicated and possibly costly action later.
12. The families that are offered a service do take up that service and the majority of cases are referred to the 0-3 service by the Community Paediatricians.
13. Providing a service which is focused on families with additional needs who are below the threshold for statutory intervention from Children's Services we feel will ultimately reduce the demand on the statutory services in the future.
14. We agree that the Early Help Services review has been necessary to ensure that the MTFP targets are met and to make improvement to the outcomes for children and young people whilst reducing costs of services. By bringing the Early Help Services under one 'umbrella' the authority is on target to deliver the £600,000 savings.
15. We conclude that it is imperative to retain a service for families of disabled children aged 0-3 years as this service is critical to the future wellbeing of these children and their families.
16. We also agreed that there are clear benefits to bringing the 0-3 service into a wider service which will allow for more support to be provided to families and allow for an extension of knowledge within a larger team offering support to families and young children up to the age of 19 years.
17. As the 0-3 service is not a statutory service we concluded that by transferring the service under the proposed 0-5 offer, this will build in resilience for the future work of the service and provide help for those most vulnerable families.
18. We also concluded after speaking with the Community Paediatricians and the Early Support Co-ordinators that there is a good working relationship in place between the health professionals and the authority with monthly meetings to share information and observations and are confident that this close working relationship will continue under the new arrangements.

Recommendations

19. It is recommended that this Scrutiny Committee review the new arrangements after six months of operation and meet again with parents and professionals to ensure that the same level of service has been retained and hopefully improved.

Services for Families with Disabled Children 0-3 Review Group Members

SERVICES FOR FAMILIES OF DISABLED CHILDREN AGED 0-3 YEARS
2 November 2016

PRESENT – Councillors C Taylor (in the Chair), Crudass, Crumby, Mills, Tostevin and Storr.

APOLOGIES – Councillors Crudass, Hutchinson and S. Richmond.

OFFICERS – Yvonne Coates, Head of First Contact and Locality Services and Allison Hill, Democratic Officer.

Purpose of the Meeting – To scope the review of services for families with children with disabilities aged 0-3 years.

Points Discussed and Considered -

- Yvonne advised Members that she had been tasked with examining the whole 0-19 sector (including 0-3) following the substantial cuts made in the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) .
- Consultation events with staff have been held over the summer to discuss ways to deliver the early support service in the future.
- There are currently 2.4 persons on the team delivering services for disabled children 0-3 years working with 35 families. These families are children with severe disabilities.
- It was established that the early support service was previously part of the portage service which was later developed into the 0-25 service (including 0-3).
- Members examined the list of Early Support Service key stakeholders including parent and carers, health professionals, internal Council stakeholders and education and agreed that initially Members were keen to meet with the Community Paediatricians and the Specialist Health Visitors for Continuing Care.
- The Chair advised Members that he was keen to meet with parents to discuss the service and Yvonne agreed that this could be arranged by inviting some parent representatives to an informal gathering at one of the Children's Centres.
- Members questioned if Officers were aware of families that may not be taking up the service and Yvonne advised that the multi-disciplinary team at the Memorial Hospital identify children at birth and Claire Orr, Senior Early Support Co-ordinator will be able to provide some figures on offers made to

families and how many are taken up. However it was noted that there were currently no families on the waiting list for services.

- Members agreed that they needed clarification on the exact services that are being offered and how referrals are made to the service.
- Yvonne confirmed that she would be able to provide Members with the number of families offered per year broken down into those taking up the service and those that did not; how many families have an allocated social worker; who made the referral; the level of service those families are accessing; and the range of disability of these children.
- Members agreed that it would also be helpful to know how the 0-25 Service links in with families of disabled children 0-3 years.
- With regard to experiences in education settings, it was suggested that opinions from the teaching professions would be useful to the review.
- A Member expressed her view that there may be a fear of engagement with some families and that the service was not readily known about outside of the authority and it was agreed that signposting would be examined as the local authority has a statutory duty to deliver this service.
- Members also agreed that it would be useful to have the performance targets relating to the service.

ACTION – Meet with families/parents/carers by end of November.

SERVICES FOR FAMILIES OF DISABLED CHILDREN AGED 0-3 YEARS
Review meeting held at McNay Street Childrens Centre
Monday 12 December 2016

Present: Councillors CTaylor (Chair); L Hughes, Tostevin, Mills and Helen Crumbie.
Also Present: four parents

Purpose of the meeting - To ascertain the views of users of the Council's service for families who have children with disabilities in the specific 0 -3 years age group.

Points Discussed and Considered -

Members listened to the parents and asked questions relating to their experiences of the service. The families were very supportive of the service and the following points were highlighted:-

- The small team operating the service were informed by the maternity team at the hospital so that the parents did not need to seek out the service.
- Because the team is small families are able to have a relationship with one person. There is no need to repeatedly explain their circumstances to new people.
- Communications between members of the team are excellent so that, in the event of the regular contact being unavailable, another member of the team is able to stand in without needing to be briefed.
- The team member is able to liaise with services for children from 3+ and make transition much smoother than it might otherwise be.

Above all, parents and members agreed that such positive intervention at this early stage would be more likely to lessen the need for much more complicated and possibly costly action later.

After the meeting members agreed that they would seek to speak to members of the team and also a health visitor and paediatrician before making recommendations during the consultation period of the Medium Term Financial Plan 2017/2018.

SERVICES FOR FAMILIES OF DISABLED CHILDREN AGED 0-3 YEARS 27 February 2016

PRESENT – Councillors C Taylor (in the Chair), Crudass, Crumbie, Curry, Kelly, Storr and Storr.

APOLOGIES – Councillor Lister; Paula Greasley, Early Support Co-ordinator.

OFFICERS – Yvonne Coates, Head of First Contact and Locality Services; Avril Bissell, Early Support Co-ordinator; Clare Orr, Senior Early Support Co-ordinator; Dr Jemma Dobson and Dr Anne Kelly, Community Paediatricians; and Allison Hill, Democratic Officer.

Purpose of the Meeting – To seek the views of the Early Support Workers and the Community Paediatricians on the proposed changes to the services for families of children aged 0-3 years (0-3 service).

Points Discussed and Considered -

- The Chair advised the Group that the meeting with families at McNay Children's Centre had been very helpful and confirmed that families valued the 0-3 service. He stated that it was also apparent from speaking with the parents that they felt they could contact the Early Support Co-ordinators and receive advice and help whenever they needed it.
- Claire Orr, the Senior Early Support Co-ordinator advised Members that there were currently three members of staff in the 0-3 service, 2 working term time. All staff have met with Yvonne Coates as part of the Early Help restructure consultation process and are supportive of proposed changes to bring the service into the 0-19 Service (Early Help and Intervention).
- Claire advised Members that she does feel the strain during school holidays as she was the only member of staff working.
- The 0-3 service primarily work with families in their homes and support families to access other services within the community. This support will continue as part of the 0-5 model (within 0-19 Services)
- Yvonne Coates stated that the majority of 0-3 services are offered term time and by bringing the service into a wider service, this will allow for more support and extension of knowledge being part of a team offering a continuation of support up to 19 years.
- Yvonne was asked by a Member to give assurances that the personal touch will continue within the new service and Yvonne confirmed that all cases will have a Lead Practitioner so that families have a named individual to provide continuity and build valuable relationships.

- Dr Dobson advised the Group that she sees very young children with complex needs and agreed that the 0-3 service provided valuable continual support that the health professionals are unable to do and approved the move to 0-5 services as most of these children have life- long conditions and it will be more beneficial to families to have the continual support of the service up to 19 years.
- It was noted that the aim of the new service will be to build resilience in families in the home and to be able to access the services they require to do this.
- It was also noted that within Lifestages there is a criteria to meet but with the 0-19 services there will be a whole range of staff to pick up children at different stages of their development.
- Members questioned how the service is accessed and were advised that this is through the Children's Access Point by way of a standardised referral under the triage service. This ensures that the correct service is assigned at the correct time. Any safeguarding issues can also be highlighted at this stage.
- Dr Dobson confirmed that there were specialist expertise within the 0-3 team who can give advice on the complex developmental needs of children.
- A Member questioned the working relationship between the NHS and the Council and the Senior Early Support Co-ordinator confirmed that there was a very good working relationship with health colleagues whom she meets on a monthly basis when observations can be shared. The Early Support Co-ordinators are also copied into reports from the Clinics with the children and Dr Kelly confirmed that there was a good sharing of information both ways in place, and also good links with Occupational Therapists, Physiotherapists and the Speech and Language Therapy Department.
- A Member requested an outline of the day-to-day activities of the 0-3 service and was advised that the Support Co-ordinators seek consents from families for a year; carry out Early Help Assessments to gauge the family views and assess development levels and address any concerns; support families in their homes and also away from the home on days out i.e. to sensory rooms, soft play areas, Children's Centres; address any issues with siblings and help to alleviate any stresses on the whole family using a flexible holistic approach to the child.
- Dr Dobson confirmed that the 0-3 service are able to offer specific direct advise to families to help them bring on their child and to find out what other specialists are available to help with this process and to offer reassurance to the parents and help them focus on the positives.

- Yvonne advised the Members that personalised packages are developed for each child within the first year from birth and this has a huge impact on the parents and helps build resilience within those families.
- Dr Kelly confirmed that as Community Paediatricians they see the children for review but do not see families in the home environment and felt that the 0-3 Service fills in the gaps to assist the child progress better. Seeing families in their homes also allows for preventative work as disabled children are more at risk of abuse.
- It was noted that Health Visitors provide a statutory service from 2 ½ years only and although the Community Paediatricians do link in with Health Visitors they do not offer any specialist intervention.
- Yvonne Coates advised the Members that under the new proposals the 0-3 service would become part of the 0-19 service and be a part of the 0-5 offer. 9 Full time equivalent staff will take on this role and they will be a key priority group to initially work with. The 0-3 service is not a statutory service and it was felt that under the proposed 0-5 offer it will build resilience for the future work with these families, of which some families are dual worked.
- With regard to the savings to be made within the Medium Term Financial Plan, Yvonne confirmed that by bringing the services together the service was on target to deliver £600,000 savings.
- A Member asked how the success of the new service will be measured and Yvonne advised that the performance framework will measure inputs and output and an Audit of Cases will be carried out; also some specific material was being developed for children to gain their feedback and will report back to Scrutiny Members at the end of the year.
- It was noted that the new service was due to launch on 1st April and Members agreed that after the first six months of operation they intended to speak with the parents of the disabled children again to see if service has retained the same levels as previously and also to speak with the health professionals to confirm that the same good working relationships are continued.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Title: Services for Families of Disabled Children 0-3 **Start Date:** Nov 2016 **End Date:** Jan/Feb 2017
Scrutiny: Children and Young People Scrutiny

PURPOSE/AIM	RESOURCE
<p>'Deep dive' examination of the services for families with children with disabilities 0-3 years.</p>	<p>Scrutiny Members Kevin Kelly, Head of Service, Learning and Disabilities Life Stages Yvonne Coates, Head of First Contact and Locality Services Stakeholders</p>
PROCESS	OUTCOME
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To test the effectiveness of the service. 2. Consult with stakeholders. 3. To examine the duties and functions of the local authority as part of The Children Act 1989 . 4. To examine the duty on the local authority as set out in The Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That Scrutiny Members are satisfied with the current services for disabled children following the removal of the Early Support Service (part of the 0-25 Team) as part of the MTFP budget cuts. 2. That this authority continues to meet its statutory requirements

COUNCILLOR
 (TO BE SIGNED BY MEMBER OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REQUESTING TOPIC)

CHAIR
 (TO BE SIGNED BY CHAIR OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEE)

