

Report of the Head of Education and Learning

EARLY HELP UPDATE

Background/Introduction

Early Help is the support given to children and families to help them to manage their own dilemmas, resolve problems and find solutions that build on their strengths and that deliver the best outcome for the individual child, young person and family. Effective Early Help will result in more children, young people and families being supported at an earlier stage and prevent the need for escalation to statutory and specialist services.

Devon's Early Help system, as reported in the 2015 Ofsted report, was not strong. Subsequently, work was undertaken to put in place new delivery structures and processes and to secure permanent leadership.

A service review was commissioned and took place in May 2017. Early Help was identified as a key area for further accelerated improvement.

Early Help is a priority for the Devon Children and Families Partnership. Improvements to Early Help are being progressed through the new multi-agency Early Help Improvement Board, previously known as the Multi-Agency Early Help Operations Group. This refreshed group is providing a strategic and coordinated overview of improvements and transformation of the Early Help system.

Early Help Self-assessment

In November 2016, the [Early Help Service Transformation Maturity Model](#) was published, by the Department for Communities and Local Government, with the expectation that partners in each local area make a robust self-assessment of their performance, using local evidence. The document provides a framework for local areas to assess their performance against six themes. Each area is assessed against four levels of maturity (each with its own set of descriptors)

Once local areas have completed their self-assessment they will undertake a 'peer review', with an area in a similar position on their transformation journey to inform their action plan. This cycle will be repeated on an annual basis.

Devon's Early Help self-assessment was started in June 2017 and has been updated over a period of time with input from a wide range of partners.

Overall, strategic leaders across the partnership have a positive view of progress in transforming Early Help services, which they are seeing in the development of the workforce, systems and practice. This has started to influence, but is not yet consistently translating, into frontline experience. However, there is strong commitment across the partnership, at all levels, to delivering change which improves the outcomes and experience for families. Devon's self-assessment (see Appendix 1) reflects feedback from frontline staff and managers in a multi-agency context.

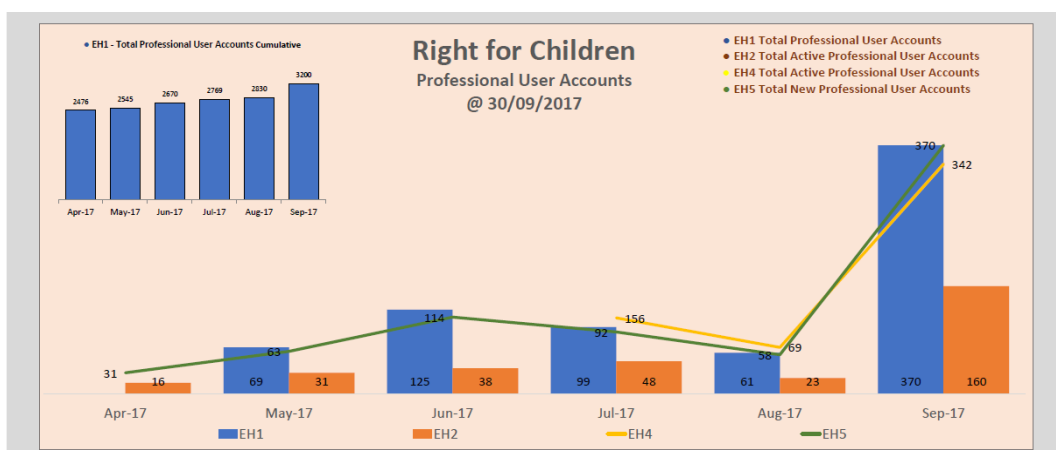
On 6th November, the Early Help Improvement Board undertook an action planning session in light of the completed self-assessment to direct the improvement work required to reach a mature and effective early help system. The Early Help Improvement Plan will be published by the end of the year.

Performance Monitoring

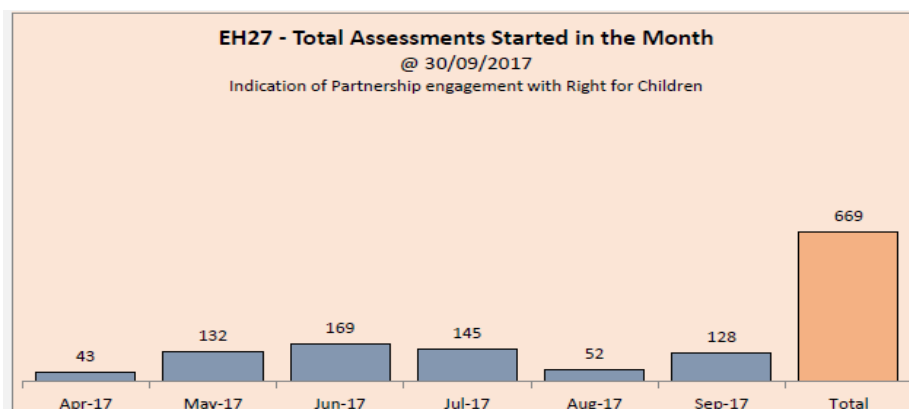
Right for Children

In April 2017, a new multi-agency case recording system, which supports information sharing, was launched called 'Right for Children'. The system design was widely consulted on across the partnership and feedback since launch has been positive.

A number of multi-agency user awareness sessions have been held across the county for practitioners to learn how to use the system. These sessions are being delivered on an ongoing basis. The number of users on Right for Children has been growing significantly since the launch – from May to September 724 new user accounts have been created on the system.



Activity is also increasing on Right for Children as reflected in the number of new Early Help Assessments started in each month since April.



Early Help Performance Scorecard

An Early Help Scorecard is in development and a number of draft measures have been produced, which will support the Early Help Improvement Board to monitor the impact and effectiveness of Early Help in Devon.

Communications

New information leaflets (see Appendix 2) have been produced to help explain Early Help in Devon to families. Alongside this a professionals' guide has also been produced. This can be personalised by individual agencies to reflect any relevant service specific information required.

Locality Partnership

The Locality Partnership exists to provide a local multi agency management structure. This is responsible for ensuring the delivery of Devon Children and Families Partnership (DCFP) priorities and, as part of the Early Help system, to be accountable for better outcomes for children, young people and families as defined in their Terms of Reference, by;

- Giving local operational leadership and direction
- Driving change
- Working in partnership to ensure improved outcomes for children, young people and families
- Promoting multi- agency participation
- Delivering the Partnership (DCFP) priorities on a locality basis
- To identify local priorities and facilitate response and inform the overarching partnership strategy
- To be the local conduit for Partnership information and priority working in relation to safeguarding
- To act as a vehicle for the identification of the developmental needs of the partnership workforce and to work with the Social Work Academy and Partnership Workforce Development group to ensure that those needs are met on a local and county level.
- To be engaged with multi agency case audits and quality assurance processes and to participate in a Learning and Improvement Framework required by Working Together 2015. To participate in *whole system quality assurance.
- To ensure service user feedback is consistently applied to performance learning and service provision

Across the county, the localities have seen a positive improvement over the last few months in partnership participation within meetings and also now include wider partners such as CAMHS and midwifery services.

There has been a good acknowledgement within the locality that networks and communication has improved due to attendance and opportunity to work together and increase learning and awareness of resources and other agencies roles and responsibilities.

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November 2017