

Early Help update report

Report of the Head of Service for Public Health Nursing-Strategic Lead for Early Help

Background

In November 2020 the Children's Scrutiny Committee completed a Spotlight Review on Early Help and aimed to:

- Understand the impact of the Early Help system and how the approach benefits children and families,
- Promote the value of Early Help approaches across the Council,
- Consider future sustainable investment into Devon's current approach to Early Help and to understand what is working and where it can be developed,
- Ensure that these approaches are reflected in the 2021/22 budget and beyond, making recommendations as necessary.

Recommendations

Recognising that Early Help intervention achieves lasting and sustainable change for children and families, and that it is estimated that late intervention costs the public sector in Devon £203 million a year, and £16.6 billion every year across England and Wales. The Spotlight Review asked the Council's Cabinet to endorse and action the recommendations requesting that an update on progress should be brought back to the Children's Scrutiny Committee.

Recommendation 1

That the Cabinet recommends a 2021/22 budget to Council which includes a significant increase in the core budget for Early Help, enabling services to plan and deliver sustainable Early Help services to families and use any additional Government grant funding to support community initiatives, short term projects and growth within the Early Help system.

Progress on Recommendation 1

The proposed next steps from September 2021 are to map the full range of council and commissioned services that contribute to the early help picture and current provision and fully understand the financial picture.

Recommendation 2

That the Cabinet continue to lobby Government to provide adequate funding across public services which:

- (a) recognises increasing demand for all services across local authorities, schools and partners
- (b) accurately and fairly reflects the needs of the local area
- (c) recognises the value of Early Help services and the vital role that all partners play in delivering real and sustainable change for families

Progress on Recommendation 2

Councillor James McInnes, in his capacity as Chair of the F40 Group, routinely raised these issues and raised Early Help at every opportunity when meeting with the Department for Education (DfE).

The F40 Group represent a group of the lowest funded education authorities in England.

Recommendation 3

That the Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Schools be asked to lobby the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and Devon MPs to:

(a) ensure that 2021/22 local government settlement includes ringfenced funding for the troubled families programme so that Early Help services in Devon can continue to be delivered throughout the next financial year.

(b) make a long-term funding commitment to the Troubled Families programme (or equivalent), ensuring that local authorities and partners are able to make long term, sustainable plans to prevent children and families reaching 'crisis point', and support them to thrive into the future.

(c) consider providing authorities (such as Devon) who have consistently shown their ability to deliver lasting and sustainable change for families through the Troubled Families programme, with ringfenced funding based on population and need, rather than 'results'.

Progress on Recommendation 3

Councillor James McInnes wrote to Vicky Ford MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families on 10th November 2020 on Early Help and the absence of a long-term financial settlement from the Troubled Families Grant. Councillor McInnes' letter highlighted the three sections detailed in Recommendation 3. *Appendix 1*

Kelly Tolhurst MP, Minister for Rough Sleeping and Housing, responded on behalf of the Government on 15th December 2020. The Minister stated the Government is looking to build on the Troubled Families Programme to build the resilience of families. As of September 2020, the programme led to 4,107 successful family outcomes from 2015 in Devon. *Appendix 2*

In addition, as part of F40, Councillor McInnes regularly spoke to Silver Civil Servants at the DfE and reiterated the importance of the Troubled Families Programme and the importance of a long-term funding settlement.

On 26th March 2021, the **Government confirmed the change of name from the Troubled Families Programme to Supporting Families Programme** to better reflect the role key workers play and to reduce stigmatisation.

Current Position

Funding and Sustainability

Devon's Early Help services are in part funded by the County Council's core budget, and partly by the Supporting Families Programme (payment by results) administered by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). The Public Health Grant (and other funding streams) totalling £448,000 also part fund Y-Smart youth drug and alcohol services.

The table below sets out the Budget for the 21/22 Early Help co-ordination service and Children's Centre Contracts

Early Help Co-ordination 21/22 Service	Gross Expenditure	Supporting Families Grant	Other funding streams	Net Revenue Budget	Budgeted FTEs
Youth Intervention Team	432,000			432,000	10.86
Family Intervention Team	1,127,000			1,127,000	29.21
Early Help Operational Management	628,000			628,000	12.00
Early Help Connectors	375,000			375,000	9.00
Family Group Conferencing	616,000			616,000	18.81
Y-Smart	649,000		-448,000	201,000	12.31
Increased Early Help Capacity (Pro-rata 12 month only)	218,000	-218,000		0	13.59
Troubled Families Database & Project Team	203,000	-203,000		0	3.00
Finance and Support Costs	20,000	-20,000		0	
Locality Budgets	80,000	-80,000		0	
Parenting Courses	15,000	-15,000		0	
Other					
Contribution to Early Help Teams		-1,802,000		-1,802,000	
Total	4,363,000	-2,338,000	-448,000	1,577,000	108.78

Childrens Centre Contract				£5,822,000	
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Staffing structure

The table below sets out the current staffing model for the Early Help Service

Early Help Co-ordination 21/22 Service	Budgeted FTEs
Youth Intervention Team	10.86
Family Intervention Team	29.21
Early Help Operational Management	12.00
Early Help Connectors	9.00
Family Group Conferencing	18.81
Y-Smart	12.31
Increased Early Help Capacity (Pro-rata 12 month only)	13.59
Troubled Families Database & Project Team	3.00
Total	108.78

Of the staff working within Early Help, there are circa 38 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) who are employed on fixed term contracts and have built up employment rights as a result of service. 11.9 FTEs are also fixed term and with continued employment will also accrue the same rights.

Information from the Supporting Families Programme policy paper in March 2021 indicates that funding will continue, reporting that over the next year work will be undertaken with areas to develop a renewed upfront funding offer, there is no current confirmation regarding the funding levels.

The Early Help System and Triage

In Devon (August 21), we currently have 3811 families being supported across Early Help by 3239 practitioners encompassing 366 organisations and 787 services. In the last financial year,

Early Help has achieved successful 'Supporting Families' outcomes for 664 families as defined by Devon's Early Help outcomes framework.

From March 2020, as a response to Covid-19 and in order to get more help to families struggling through lockdown and isolation, Locality Partnerships and Early Help Triages stepped up in frequency and observed increased engagement from partners, including adult and health services. Early Help Triage has experienced an average **58.0%** increase in the period (April 2020 – June 2021) in families discussed at Triage over the previous comparative period.

Feedback from the partnership on Early Help's capabilities to scale up to meet demand has been one of the success stories in Devon's response to families during this period. Early Help Area Managers have played a central role in the coordination of support in Incident Management for children impacted by school closures, ensuring information is shared with social care and partnership services.

Response to Covid-19

As a result of increased demand on our partners to maintain activity within the Early Help system at the same time as increased demand in relation to managing the impact of the pandemic within their own organisations, Devon secured Covid funding to provide the following support roles.

- 8 x Early Help Connectors
- 4 x Domestic Abuse Connectors
- 8 x additional Family Intervention Team (FIT) staff
- In response to increased demand for support, the Early Help South Locality in collaboration with SPACE are proposing to offer the following group interventions available to children and young people aged 10-18 years over the coming year:
- 8 x workshops provided on emotional resilience and self-care in the caring professions, delivered across our locality partnerships and practitioner forums.
- In response to partnership concerns about line of sight of unborn – 2 years and hidden harm, the Early Help System has rolled out vulnerable pregnancy pathway meetings across all 4 localities. An enhanced and integrated support programme is being developed which will provide specialist support for children and their families throughout pregnancy and for the first two and a half years of life.

A total £904,000 of specific covid grant has been accessed for Early Help, as detailed below:

Description	20/21	21/22 (forecast)
Early Help Access Connectors		280,000
Early Help Connectors - Domestic Violence	40,596	100,000
Family Intervention Team enhanced staffing		225,000
Staff Overtime	7,924	10,000
Wellness and Self Care – SPACE - school groups		36,000
Emotional Resilience workshops		3,000
Winter/Local Support Grant - For families suffering hardship during winter with heating, utilities, and food	111,946	90,000
Total	160,466	744,000

COVID Local Support Grant

The grant was designed to directly help families and individuals who have been hardest hit by the coronavirus pandemic.

Under this fund, Early Help were able to provide a grant per family to support with:

- Providing vouchers for food and personal items.
- Supporting with energy and water bills for household purposes.
- With other requests clearly linking to the priorities of the fund, grants can be provided for essential white goods such as a cooker, fridge or freezer.

Winter Triage Records 16th April to 20th June

Locality		Food & Utilities	Other	Total
EastMid	No Families	28	16	44
	£	8,360.00	3,964.94	12,324.94
Exeter	No Families	29	5	34
	£	5,268.07	1,130.00	6,398.07
South	No Families	48	17	65
	£	14,890.00	6,430.00	21,320.00
North	No Families	27	6	33
	£	4,576.00	745.98	5,321.98
Total	No Families	132	44	176
	£	33,094.07	12,270.92	45,364.99

Challenges

A significant increase in families requiring Early Help is continuing to be seen across the partnership. There are local challenges around increasing demand and capacity to respond across the partnership within many agencies. There are no current indications of any decrease in demand, anticipation and expectation across the partnership is that volumes may increase further when schools return in September, placing additional strain and pressure on partners.

The main issues and areas of need identified are domestic abuse, parental and child mental health, childrens' behavioural issues linked to child mental health and also behavioural issues for children and young people linked to Autistic Spectrum Disorder.

Next steps

Our existing early help offer is based around early help triage meetings which brings all partners together to talk about families and their needs. This is done by one agency preparing a team around the family document setting out the family circumstances. In order for the family to be discussed at a triage meeting, a further form is required called a request for services. At the meeting, various agencies discuss the family and agreement is sought for a service to be offered. We recognise that the demand challenges are prompting us to consider early help capacity.

Our next steps therefore must involve the necessary mapping of existing needs and services, understanding the full financial picture, and using this to review the current system. Early help is vital in supporting our stated aim of reducing children in care and on child protection plans by 10% in two years, with better outcomes for children as a result. We will begin this work with mapping current provision in September 2021.

Name Kate Stephens, Head of Service, Public Health Nursing- Strategic Lead for Early Help

Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Schools Councillor Andrew Leadbetter
Chief Officer Melissa Caslake

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972: LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

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Appendix 1



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Appendix 2



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