

Early Help

What was the issue

OFSTED found in September 2014 that:

“Family support is delivered through 22 children’s centres, the very large majority of which were judged to be good or better in their most recent Ofsted inspections. In the past year, 717 families (with 1,402 children) received early help, which prevented the need for more intensive support.”

“The Integrated Youth Support Service (IYSS) provides good support for older children and young people, resulting in a steady drop in the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training, a reduction in teenage pregnancies and an increase in young people accessing sexual health services.”

“The number of young people subject to anti-social behaviour orders is reducing.”

“The Families for Change programme, funded through the Troubled Families initiative, has achieved effective change with 435 (65%) of the 730 families worked with. The Family Recovery Programme (FRP) has had a positive impact on families, which include adults with problematic substance misuse, mental ill- health and who are subject to domestic abuse. Since August 2013, 13 out of 75 families have successfully completed year-long interventions and have been stepped down to universal services.”

Ofsted also noted the following areas for improvement:

“Too many Family CAFS do not meet a good enough standard and fail to capture the views of children and their families, or to include clear action plans.”

“Data and information on cases which step down to universal services or step up to children’s social care are not collated.”

“The single assessment, introduced in April 2014, is not ensuring that children and young people’s needs are met in a timely way.”

“The authority has failed to act upon the recommendation from previous inspections to improve the consistency and quality of referrals, including notifications from the police.”

“The threshold for intervention by children’s social care is not understood by all partner agencies.”

“The quality of many referrals is poor and not all agencies complete the multi-agency referral form (MARF). This results in a significant number of inappropriate contacts to children’s social care.”

Our journey since the last Ofsted inspection

In the first 7 months after inspection progress was slow in addressing the key findings from Ofsted. A Draft Early Help Strategy and Action Plan had been previously developed

Early Help Storyboard – September 2015 I1D3

and presented to the Board in April 2015, but due to limited consultation and engagement with partners, staff and children and young people, this action was re-opened at the June 2015 Improvement Board. The lack of real progress was further exacerbated by a protracted recruitment process to Team Manager and Head of Service posts.

In response:

Since then we have picked up the pace significantly;

- The Assistant Director for Early Help took up post on the 1st July 2015.
- The three Heads of Service were subsequently appointed and began on the 17th September.
- Eight of the 9 Team Manager posts have been filled with the interviews for the remaining two posts taking place in October. (We are currently looking to fill the remaining post through a secondment opportunity in partnership with South Yorkshire).
- In addition, the Strategic Director has secured the services of the Assistant Director for Prevention and Early Intervention Services in Sheffield, Dawn Walton, to offer support for 2 days per week until the 31st March 2016.

These appointments will provide the leadership and capacity to drive forward the improvements required. This Team now meets weekly and with the extended Early Help Team every two weeks.

We have now **completed a whole service review of all Early Help staff** and locked down our final staffing establishment with HR and Finance sign off. **Staff were relocated into the new teams on the 5th October with subsequent briefings to staff and Trade Unions taking place on the 5th, 15th and 19th October.**

We also completed a vacancy review and this has also been validated and signed off. **We now have a weekly vacancy control in place, a 100% PDR completion rate and 100% budget out-turn rate.**

We now have a tight grip and oversight of all HR and financial matters across Early Help.

As a result establishing and chairing a weekly property meeting we have also **finalised our Locality Team structures across 3 Teams (North, South & Central) and 9 Areas.**

We have completed a major review of all property that provides office space and delivery points. **We have identified our integrated locality bases and are now in the process of facilitating our managed moves with Property and IT.** Sites include collocating with social care, Health, Schools and a range of partners.

We have undertaken a review of the role of the Early Help Assessment Team (EHAT) within the MASH and produced a set of proposals for a service redesign to secure more efficient business processes that are safe and effective. The current model does not maximise our ability to understand need at the earliest opportunity and impacts negatively upon the re-referral rate to Children's Social Care.

We have established a **multi-agency task and finish group to develop an Early Help Assessment & Request for Early Help Support** based on the Strengthening Families model and a one family, one worker, one plan principle. **The drafts of both of these critical forms is now completed and currently being piloted in the Pupil Referral Unit and Wingfield School. Both forms are being simultaneously developed as on-line assessments to make pathways into early help easier, quicker and more efficient and effective.**

We have developed and introduced a **new (electronic) Case Audit tool** and all managers and Heads of Service to routinely undertake **x2 Case Audits per month**.

We are making good progress with our 0-19 Pathway with real engagement from partners moving this forward with enthusiasm and pace. This will also be available as interactive on-line tool for all partners and practitioners as part of our **Early Help Offer website**.

We have made rapid progress in developing an on-line Early Help Offer, with over **76 services and agencies having completed a service synopsis of what they offer and how it can be accessed**.

We will be reporting **Early Help performance** measures for the first time in October (September 15 data). Until we move to the new (Liquid Logic) Case Management System this will continue to be an inefficient process with 7 different data bases and systems to interrogate to extract data. **As a result we have established a Task & Finish group to rationalise our databases in readiness for data migration and to enable existing data information sharing and reporting more efficient and effective**. We have arranged for a **demo of the Early Help module to take place on the 22nd October and a visit to Sandwell for a service demonstration**.

At the September Improvement Board **15 immediate priorities** were agreed to increase the pace of improvement. **These are being worked up into a detailed Action Plan and risk register**.

We intend to undertake a significant engagement piece with the Early Help Strategy. This began with a presentation to the Safer Rotherham Partnership on the 8th October and will continue with a briefing to the Youth Cabinet on the 14th October and a series of staff, partner and Early Help Head Teacher briefings on the 24^h, 25th November and 7th December.

The Early Help Strategy will be coproduced with Children, Young People and Families and all of our partners and Stakeholders. We will also undertake an **Equalities Impact Assessment** and look for a **final sign off at the December Improvements Board**.

We have also just begun to scope a **development programme** to support the new managers to move from a single service / professional discipline role to an integrated, early help leadership role. **On the 12th October I identified a workforce development lead to take this work forward with the Principal Social Worker, building on our Early Help Workforce Workshop on the 26th August 2015. I have also agreed that we will work collaboratively with Sheffield City Council Children's Services to enable, shadowing, buddying and peer development opportunities**.

Work is also underway to provide assurance on **Inspection readiness** for our Children Centres and Youth Offending Service. This includes inspections and mystery shopping exercises from our Young Inspectors.

In October I requested a **review of the Education Welfare Service** and we will be working with Members, partners and stakeholders in a review of our Youth Services.

What difference has this made?

Whilst the new appointments have only been in place a matter of weeks they are making a significant contribution. We now have the capacity and the right mix of skills, experience and leadership to pick up the pace of change. Progress and impact will be measured through our Action Plan and Monthly reporting.

Areas for Improvement

Whilst securing our Heads of Service and 7 Team Managers we have yet to fill our remaining 2 Team Manager posts within our target date.

We have taken a different approach to the production of our Early Help Strategy. This will be developed over a series of engagement sessions throughout October and November. This includes three Head Teacher Briefings in November and a series of consultation roadshows across the borough with staff, partners and service users. The Final Early Help Strategy will come to the December Improvement Board for sign off.

Preliminary October figures are showing our "Not Known" post 16 figures as much higher than expected at 26.5%. I have actioned an urgent response to address this.

Current FCAF figures are low. However, this does not account for the true number of Early Help Assessments and targeted interventions across early help. This is due to the current reporting and recording arrangements (seven different systems and over 30 different assessment and referral processes). As we pull this data into one recording system we expect to see a month on month increase in the number of Requests for Early Help, Early Help Assessments completed and the number of cases stepped down to Early Help.

Progress this period (since the last board)

- We have identified 15 immediate priorities to be achieved by December 2015.
- 3 Heads of Service appointed and in post.
- 8 Team Managers appointed and process in place to appoint the remaining 2 in October.
- Additional support secured from the Assistant Director for Prevention and Early Intervention Services in Sheffield.
- 100% PDR completion rate. (59% at the beginning of September).
- £1million pounds of proposed savings identified over the next 3 years.
- 100% of Budget Outturns completed in October.
- Due to better financial grip and new spend controls, our current projected overspend reduced by £100k to £150k.
- Every post within the Early Help establishment reviewed and validated with HR and Finance.
- Education Welfare Review underway.
- All posts transferred to the new locality teams on 5th October.
- Early Help Quality Standards in place (including 2 Case audits per month by each Team Manager, Head of Service and Assistant Director).
- We have developed and implemented an on-line Quality Audit Tool with monthly reporting to the Early Help SMT.
- Bi-Weekly Early Help SMT Meetings in place.
- Weekly Early Help Leadership Team Meetings in place.
- Review of business support across the whole of Early Help underway.

- Established and lead a weekly property meeting.
- New locality bases identified and managed moves of staff now underway.
- Early Help Offer website underway with over 70 services and agencies already responded.
- Development of Monthly reporting on key Early Help performance measures completed with reporting commenced in October.
- Review of the Early Help Assessment Team and interface with MASH completed.
- Multi agency working group established to develop the Single Assessment process across Early Help.
- Request for Early Help Support and Early Help Assessment forms developed and being piloted in the borough.
- Engagement on the Early Help Strategy underway with Head Teaching briefings booked for 24^h, 25th November and 7th December.

Improvement Actions for next month

- Secure the **permanent structures** for Early Help: All Heads of Service and Team Managers to be appointed and inducted with regular supervision and up to date PDR's.
- Refresh the **Early Help Strategy** and re-engage with staff, partners, members and Children, young people throughout October and November.
- Identify **savings and efficiencies** as part of the All Service Reviews (ASR's) and identify future savings and cost avoidance using the EIF Cost benefits analysis tool by the end of September 2015.
- Refresh the **Early Help Action Plan** and ensure alignment with the Corporate Improvement Plan and the refreshed Children and Young People's Improvement Plan by the end of October 2015.
- Implement the Early Help **Performance Scorecard & Monthly Reporting** by the end of September, with the first report delivered in October 2015.
- Development of a set of '**Quality Standards**' to be adhered to across all Early Help provision by end September 2015.
- Strengthen the arrangements for **children who go missing and return home interviews** by end September 2015.
- Develop a coproduced **Early Help Pathway** with partners, including Children & Young People by end October 2015.
- Strengthen the **Step Down arrangements** between Early Help and Social Care by end October 2015.
- Confirm the **governance arrangements** for Early Help through the Children & Young People's Strategic Partnership by end October 2015.
- Ensure the development needs of the **Early Help workforce** are incorporated into the CYPS Workforce Strategy in partnership with the Principal Child and Family Social Worker by end October 2015.
- **Rationalise the current Family Support services** (Family Recovery Programme, Targeted Family Support, Family Engagement and Families for Change) by end

November 2015.

- **Undertake a review of Education Welfare**
- Implementation of the Early Help and Family Engagement **locality model**: North, South and Central Teams with 9 locality clusters across the borough by November 2015.
- Develop a co-produced **Early Help Offer** with partners, including Children & Young People by end November 2015.
- Implementation of an **Early Help Assessment and Request for Early Help** process by November 2015.
- Early Intervention Foundation Maturity Matrix completed with all managers to inform priority actions by the end of November 2015.
- Implement the Quality Assurance Framework across Early Help by the end of November 2015.

Highlights

In the few weeks that the Early Help Leadership Team has been in place. I believe that the achievements in this report demonstrate that the pace has picked up at that real progress is being made against our key priorities.