

## **Summary Sheet**

Early Help Progress Report September – December 2015

**Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?**

No

**Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report**

Ian Thomas

**Report Author(s)**

David McWilliams  
Assistant Director Early Help & Family Engagement

**Ward(s) Affected** All

## **Summary**

The purpose of this report is to update the Board on the progress in developing Rotherham's Early Help Offer.

## **Recommendations**

That the contents of the report are noted.

## **List of Appendices Included**

N/A

## **Background Papers**

- Children's Improvement Plan

## **Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel**

- Early Help Review Board
- Budget Working Group
- Improving Lives

## **Council Approval Required**

No

## **Exempt from the Press and Public**

No

## **1. Recommendations**

1.1 That the progress report is noted.

## **2. Background**

2.1 In the first 7 months after our Ofsted inspection progress was slow in addressing the key Ofsted findings and recommendations. A draft Early Help Strategy and Action Plan had been previously developed and presented to the Board in April 2015, but due to limited consultation and engagement with partners, staff, children and young people, this action was re-opened at the June 2015 Improvement Board. The lack of progress was further exacerbated by a protracted recruitment process to the Assistant Director, Team Manager and Head of Service posts.

2.2 Further to the initial delay, progress has been accelerated:-

- The Assistant Director for Early Help took up post on the 1st July 2015.
- Three Heads of Service were subsequently appointed and began on the 17th September, 2015.
- All nine of the Team Manager posts have been filled with the final appointment made on the 16<sup>th</sup> December 2015.
- 3 Children Centre Leader Posts were all successfully appointed to.

2.3 In addition, the Strategic Director for Children's Services 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.

2.4 These appointments have provided the necessary leadership and capacity to drive forward the improvements required. The Early Help Leadership Team now meets weekly and the extended Early Help Team meet every two weeks. This includes colleagues from Public Health. To support our staff we have also created an Early Help intranet site.

<http://rmbcintranet/Directorates/CYPS/SitePages/EarlyH.aspx?PageView=Shared&InitialTabId=Ribbon.WebPartPage&VisibilityContext=WSSWebPartPage>

2.5 We have completed a whole service review of our Early Help staff and locked down our final staffing establishment with HR and Finance sign off. Staff were transferred into the new locality teams on the 5<sup>th</sup> October with subsequent briefings to staff and Trade Unions taking place on the 5<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> October to offer reassurance about the changes.

2.6 This was a huge undertaking as previously staff were configured across 8 separate services. As a result, we now have a tight grip and oversight of all HR and financial matters across Early Help.

- 2.7 In October we completed a vacancy review and put in place a weekly vacancy control. We achieved a 100% PDR completion rate (previously 59%) and 100% budget out-turn rate for the past 4 months (Previously 76%) which has resulted in the projected overspend of £250k being managed down into a projected underspend.
- August £250k Over
  - September £159k Over
  - October £108k Over
  - November £24k Under
- 2.8 In addition, all Freedom of Information Requests (FOI), MP Letters and complaints continue to be completed within time scales. Whilst these may seem the most basic of functions within an effective and efficient organisation, they were not in place 3 months ago and will give assurance of management grip, staff compliance and progress.
- 2.9 We have also established a monthly meeting with Trade Unions and HR to both consolidate and build upon our improved relationship.
- 2.10 As a result of establishing a weekly property meeting we have completed a major review of all property in the borough that will provide Early Help office space and service delivery points. We have identified our integrated locality bases and are well underway with facilitating our managed moves with Property and IT. Sites include co-locating with social care and a range of partners including Health and Schools.
- 2.11 There are in excess of 30 different referral routes into Early Help. Each referral pathway has its own criteria, assessment and evaluation criteria recorded across 8 different databases. To address this we established a 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 draft Early Help Assessment form was piloted in the Pupil Referral Units and the Wingfield School Learning Community and with all early help practitioners in November / December 2015. Both forms are being simultaneously developed on-line to make pathways into Early Help simpler and more efficient and effective. We are planning to launch the new processes in 2016.
- 2.12 The development of these pathways has been a critical element of our coproduction workshops which took place throughout November and December with staff and partners (See 2.23).
- 2.13 In October we reviewed the role of the Early Help Assessment Team (EHAT) within the MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub) and reconfigured the Team to secure more efficient and effective processes. A new Early Help screening process has been introduced as an interim solution to enable the systematic screening of cases below statutory thresholds. In November the previous backlog of Assessments was cleared and allocated to the new locality teams, 98 cases were identified as requiring support through our Early Help Assessment and planning process, 17 cases were accepted as 'Step Down' from Children's Social

Care and there were 8 new co-working agreements for open statutory cases to be supported by Early Help workers. This highlights real progress in terms of consolidating referral routes into the service and over the coming months we will monitor progress of these cases as assessments are completed and Early Help support is implemented through the locality teams.

- 2.14 We are speaking with social care colleagues on how the new arrangements can be improved further. This includes the implementation of a Step Down / Step Up panel.
- 2.15 We are in the final stages of completing our 0-19 Pathway. A draft was shared with the Family Nurse Partnership and Health Visitors on the 10<sup>th</sup> December 2015. We intend to launch our 0-19 pathway as an interactive on-line tool for all partners and practitioners as part of our Early Help Offer website.
- 2.16 We are making 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.
- 2.17 Since October, we began reporting Monthly performance measures for the first time. However, 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 in order to extract the required data. As a result, we have an interim arrangement in place in readiness for data migration and to enable existing data information sharing and reporting to be more efficient and effective.
- 2.18 In November 2015 we finalised our Early Help Quality Standards and we developed and introduced a new (electronic) Case Audit tool which all Team Managers and Heads of Service are required to undertake x1 Case Audit per month as part of the wider Early Help QA Framework.
- 2.19 In December 2015 Early Help was acknowledged by South Yorkshire Police as making a significant contribution to a 20% borough wide reduction in anti-social behaviour as a result of the Dark Nights intervention delivered in partnership with South Yorkshire Police. This was followed up on the 7th December, 2015, when our locality teams deployed staff to take part in a multi-agency week of impact in conjunction with South Yorkshire Police, the Area Assembly and other key stakeholders to ensure that identification of children and vulnerable young people is prioritised across Rotherham. This included a Keep-safe event on the 9th December, 2015, and a multi-agency networking event at the Clifton Learning Community.
- 2.20 In October 2015 we reported our best ever NEET figures. Rotherham's final (NCCIS validated) figures in September were:
  - Y11 – 98% offers made (against a national average of 97%)
  - Y12 – 97% offers made (against a national average of 91%)
  - Combined – 97.6% offers made (against a national average of 94.1%)

2.21 This is a significant improvement on the 2014 figures when our combined figure was 92.2%. Out of the 15 authorities in the Yorkshire and Humber Region we were the joint 4th best performer.

2.22 At the September Children's Improvement Board, 15 immediate priorities were agreed to increase the pace of improvement. These were subsequently worked up into a detailed Early Help Action Plan and Risk Register.

2.23 We are currently in the final stages of a significant engagement piece to coproduce the Early Help Strategy. This began with a presentation to the Safer Rotherham Partnership on the 8<sup>th</sup> October, 2015, and a follow up on the 7<sup>th</sup> December, 2015. In addition, there have been coproduction events and briefings with the; Improving Lives Scrutiny Panel, Chairs and Vice Chair's Forum, VCS Consortium, Youth Cabinet and LAC Council, Social Care Teams, Staff in Early Help Locality Teams, Youth Offending Team and a series of Head Teacher staff and partner coproduction workshops at Rockingham on the 24<sup>h</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup> November, 2015, and 7th December, 2015.

***"It was great to be in a forum where you felt that you were being listened to. It was also useful to talk to others from different professions and providers. This fostered a much better understanding of the whole area of Early Help."***

***"Really helpful – appreciate being consulted. Love the idea of one named point of contact for schools."***

***"This session was really useful and helpful. It's good to know who is available and the services available. Great to know how the system is going to work."***

***"Found the group dialogue useful rather than being talked at. Could ask questions and get a 'proper' answer."***

***"Felt the 2 way process today was good much clearer on Early Help."***

***"Universal services, preventing escalation to Social Care. Very positive session. Love the proposed structure with Team Manager and Link Worker. Love the simple form which is then allocated out and very bespoke for the family. I will share all this with my LC Heads."***

***"Very useful workshops – feel really positive about future developments in Early Help."***

2.24 Whilst the evaluation from these events has been positive regarding the approach, it is also evident from these events that we still have a long way to go to build capacity, consistency and confidence in universal settings.

***"Although I have had little involvement with Early Help at my level, it is clear that the problems which have been encountered before are still continuing and being discovered over and over again with very little change other than new faces providing the presentations for change."***

***“Useful in understanding the Early Help offer. Positive communication between all agencies is key – regular meetings to showcase what’s on offer could be useful. Joint Commissioning is key in maintaining appropriate services that meet the needs of young people and families during difficult times of financial cuts to services across all authorities.”***

***“I know very little, I have heard of Early Help but was unaware of what they actually do. My role requires me to work in a multi-agency team, working alongside Social Workers hence the majority of the families we deal with already have Social Care input.”***

***“Still quite confused, mixed messages.”***

- 2.25 We have also begun to scope a development programme to support the new Early Help Managers to move from a single service / professional discipline role to an integrated, early help leadership role. On the 12<sup>th</sup> October 2015 we identified a workforce development lead to take this work forward with the Principal Social Worker, building on our previous Early Help Workforce Workshops in the summer. We have also agreed that we will work collaboratively with Sheffield City Council Children’s Services to enable, shadowing, buddying and peer development opportunities. This work will need to be jointly taken forward with the Safeguarding Board.
- 2.26 Work is underway to provide assurance on Inspection readiness for our Children Centres and Youth Offending Team (YOT). The Youth Offending Team has already completed a self-assessment against the Youth Justice Board Framework, but we have asked for this to be updated in January 2016. We have successfully reconfigured the Youth Offending Team governance arrangements through the Safer Rotherham Partnership and the Children and Young People’s Strategic Partnership which makes our governance arrangements compliant with the Youth Justice Board requirements.
- 2.27 In January we are bringing in an external consultant to support the new Children Centre Leaders to prepare their Self-Evaluation Forms in readiness for the revised inspection Framework and we recently ran additional Saturday training for Day Care staff where issues around leadership and the safeguarding process had been raised. All Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks are completed and temporary staff for day care comes from an approved pool or through process. Previously, quality audits had not been completed by Children Centres with a lack of management oversight identified as a concern, but our new system for audits will ensure that all Children Centre Leaders undertake Case Audits every month.
- 2.28 In the November half-term our Young Inspectors undertook mystery shopping exercises and an Inspection of the Rawmarsh Children Centre. Further Inspections are planned.

***“Just a brief note of thanks for the report which we are somewhat chuffed about. It has to be said that the young people involved did a superb job during their visit and in producing such a thorough, insightful and very helpful, sometimes challenging, report. They can rest assured that we will***

*take the issues raised very seriously indeed and the overwhelming majority of the issues raised will be fully addressed as priorities. I appreciate that whilst the young people get 110% credit for an excellent piece of work (I've had OFSTED reports less professionally produced, constructive and helpful) your help will have also played a vital part. I look forward to the follow up discussion and meeting these impressive young people and yourself."*

**Many thanks. Peter Gerrard, Head Teacher: Head of Centre**

- 2.29 In November 2015 we established a Member led, Early Help Review Board that meets on a monthly basis through to March 2016. As part of this review we have identified savings proposals of £1million pound over 3 years. The purpose of the review is 'to understand the impact of the Early Help 3 Year ASR savings proposals and to oversee the development of Rotherham's Early Help Offer and Strategy in light of these proposals.' The Board reports directly to the Leader of the Council and is chaired by Councillor Ahmed. The Board has met twice and will put forward its savings proposals after the 5<sup>th</sup> January Board Meeting to the Budget Working Group and Overview Scrutiny Management Board.

### **3. Key Issues**

- 3.1 The past 4 months have seen the foundations laid to enable us to move forward with some confidence in 2016. The significant work which has taken place to recruit and induct new staff, lock down our permanent structures, get a grip of our HR and financial processes and secure our Team bases and delivery points has been a real achievement. We have developed the strategic Early Help governance arrangements through the Safer Rotherham Partnership and Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership so there is continuity once the Early Help Review Board, Progress Board and Improvement Board are no longer required. We continue to strengthen our links with, social care teams (through coproduction workshops and briefings), Schools, Health, South Yorkshire Police and Neighbourhoods at a locality and operational level.
- 3.2 We have an Action Plan to keep us on track and in the New Year we will be able to launch our coproduced Early Help Strategy, Early Help Offer and Early Help Pathway. We will also launch our Early Help Assessment and Request for Support and have our interim recording systems in place to monitor our progress.
- 3.3 The key priorities for 2016 include; Describing the pathway to early help support, Improved working relationships with Social Care at all levels, Strengthening Early Help within the MASH, strengthening the Step Down / Step Up Panel, embedding the Early Help Assessment and Request for Support, embedding the performance culture and quality standards, completing the Family Support Review, concluding the work of the Early Help Review Board and our 3 year savings profile, embedding the new governance structures, Inspection readiness for the Youth Offending Team and Children Centres and continuing to support and integrate our staff through a workforce development programme.

#### **4. Options considered and recommended proposal**

4.1 That the content of the report is noted.

#### **5. Consultation**

5.1 Considerable consultation on the Early Help Strategy and Offer took place throughout November and December 2015.

#### **6. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision**

6.1

#### **7. Financial and Procurement Implications**

7.1 See 2.29.

#### **8. Legal Implications**

8.1 N/A

#### **9. Human Resources Implications**

9.1 See 2.29.

#### **10. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults**

10.1 Positive.

#### **11. Equalities and Human Rights Implications**

11.1 Positive.

#### **12. Implications for Partners and Other Directorates**

12.1 Positive.

#### **13. Risks and Mitigation**

13.1 Captured in the Children's Services Risk Register, Early Help Action Plan and Children's Improvement Plan.

#### **14. Accountable Officer(s)**

David McWilliams

Approvals Obtained from:-

Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services:- Named officer

Director of Legal Services:- Named officer

Head of Procurement (if appropriate):-

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