

<h1>BRIEFING</h1>	TO:	Improving Lives Select Commission
	DATE:	4 February 2020
	LEAD OFFICER:	Ailsa Barr Assistant Director, Social Care
	TITLE:	Early Help and Social Care Pathway
1. Background		
1.1	<p>In late 2018 work began on several key transformational projects as part of the wider council Big Hearts, Big Changes programme. Within children's services there are three separate, but interdependent projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early help and social care pathway • Demand management • Market management 	
1.2	<p>The three projects are interdependent, as when demand is for social work led services is high, there are less opportunities to intervene at an early stage to provide support which might reduce the need for more intervention at a later point. As numbers of children requiring a greater statutory response increases, then the chances of being able to provide local placements for those children in the care of the local authority reduces. This drives up reliance on independent placements, sometimes at considerable distance from Rotherham.</p>	
1.3	<p>In January 2018 Ofsted's re-inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers, recognised significant improvements in practice and the report noted "Services to children in need of help and protection are now good."</p>	
1.4	<p>In late 2018 we identified that, whilst there had been progress in relation to early intervention and prevention across the partnership and that social care services were keeping children safe, there was also evidence of services at times being fragmented and there was some duplication of effort across teams. This included overlapping roles and responsibilities, multiple handovers between teams, elements of silo working and a need for improved communication between services supporting children, young people and families. It was clear from feedback that this led to a disjointed experience for some children, young people and families and that this could contribute to issues not being addressed quickly enough to prevent escalation.</p>	
1.5	<p>The systems that we had in place were very effective at moving children through the pathway ensuring appropriate oversight of activity. The performance measures gave assurance about timeliness of activity, but were less sophisticated about how effectively staff were supported to develop meaningful relationships with children, young people and their families in order that workers could use their skills, knowledge and expertise to enable families to make long-lasting positive changes.</p>	
1.6	<p>As a result of increased demand there are significant budgetary pressures within children's services. The transformational work has the dual aim of enhancing the ways</p>	

staff work with families to reduce need and to reduce reliance on high cost services, consequently reducing overall spend.

- 1.7** Through the development of the Rotherham Family Approach and training of our social work and early help staff in signs of safety and restorative practice, we are committed to supporting our staff in developing skills at working with families. We want our staff to be able to identify strengths from within the family network so as wherever possible families can be supported to understand their challenges and develop realistic solutions to reduce concerns.
- 1.8** A consequence of the historic inadequacy of services and the increased demand that arose as a result of improvement work across the partnership meant that demand for social care services rose significantly from 2015 to 2018. This demand meant that Rotherham was providing statutory led children's services to significantly more children than other local authorities of a similar size and demographic. This trend is common following identification of widespread inadequacy and is a pattern that has been replicated in many authorities. However, whilst the trend is to be expected we also reviewed our practice and structural arrangements to identify what could be done to ensure that help was provided at the earliest opportunity to prevent escalation. This review identified that some of the structural arrangements that had been put in place to support improvement of practice also at times contributed to an escalation of services.
- 1.9** In addition to the 'expected' increased demand during an improvement journey, in Rotherham there has also been the additional impact in relation to the Stovewood investigation. Suspected adult perpetrators are referred to children's social care in order that assessment can be undertaken regarding children that could be at risk now due to the concerns raised through the investigation of historical sexual abuse. Because of the nature and extent of the Stovewood investigation, in that much of the abuse involved groups of men, the investigative work is complex and can at times take months to progress which can have a corresponding impact on the length of time children's social care are involved with families.
- 1.10** We commenced our transformational work across the early help and social care pathway with a number of underpinning principles:
- Getting it right for families the first time
 - Establishing an integrated MASH
 - Providing an integrated and seamless journey for the children, young people and families of Rotherham
 - Providing clarity of roles and responsibilities along the pathway
 - Use a family approach to increase resilience and promote empowerment whilst ensuring good understanding of risk is central to assessments and plans
 - Having a distinct LAC service for our long-term looked after children
 - Developing a workforce which is sustainable, stable, confident and flexible to manage demand
 - As few transfer points as possible with a focus on stepping down demand where safe and appropriate
 - Distribute the work across the partnership through collaboration and effective signposting
- 1.11** From this we developed several workstreams to support us in making changes to our service and reduce budgetary pressure on the service and included:
- Work stream 1 – retention payment – work ongoing to consider future options and final decision still to be made – saving of £1.1m (£660k 2020/21 & £460k 2021/22)

- Work stream 2 – review of Child in Need (Locality Teams) work jointly between social care and early help – work nearly complete report due in April 2020 outlining progress and outcomes – work to date has contributed to the reduction of children in need and allowed 6 social work vacancies, to be held in the locality social work service (equivalent to 1 team) and the reduction from 2 to 1 children’s disability team (£176k saving). The budget savings (£820k) equates to the reduction of two teams over the next two financial years with £410k in 2020/21 from vacancies currently held and a further £410k in 2021/22.
- Work stream 3 – embed and review new MASH/Duty staffing – review of MASH has been delayed but social work resource in duty has been successfully reduced due to the reduction in demand – 1 social work team (£410k) was removed in 2019/20 with savings in Duty and MASH (£560K) profiled across the next two financial years.
- Work stream 4 - review of LAC service in line with projected reduction in demand – work on this workstream has just commenced – recommendations will be reviewed by DLT in early April 2020 – budget saving of £410k profiled across the next two financial years.
- Work stream 5 – further review of safeguarding service in line with projected reduction in demand – £100k savings are profiled for 2020/21 as CP and LAC numbers reduce.
- Work stream 6 – review of Evolve function – work has commenced to more closely link the work of Evolve with work to safeguard children at risk of criminal exploitation, there will be a further review of the function which will be presented to DLT in May 2020, with a current budget saving of £54k in 2020/21 linked to a vacant post.
- Work stream 7 – review of edge of care services – initial review complete, savings of £80k identified in 2020/21.
- Work stream 8 – review of specialist services, to include funding streams – joint review with the CCG has been agreed – savings linked to this workstream (£319k) are profiled for 2021/22.
- Work stream 9 – review of CYPS learning and development offer – achieved in year saving for 2019-2020 of £161,844 will be utilised to achieve the £150,000 budget saving in 2020-2021.
- Work stream 10 - further work with key stakeholders re: identification of ‘help or harm’, use of EH assessments, engagement with non-statutory helping services to reduce demand on high cost/high intervention services led by social care.
- In addition to the above specific work streams, additional budget savings across other CYPS services have been identified to generate additional savings of £690k in order to achieve the £4.3m budget saving linked to the EH & SC pathway.

1.12 Savings of £1.435m have been achieved during 2019/20 and further savings of £2.370m profiled during 2020/21 with an additional saving of £1.935m 2021/2022. The workstreams have recently been reviewed and refreshed to ensure that the work continues effectively.

1.13 Significant work has been progressed over the past 18 months and this has included us making some changes to how we respond to referrals for social work services and closer working between early help and social work teams. We have been more focused on ensuring families are provided with services from the right team as soon as possible and we have been less process driven meaning that when it has been appropriate to provide help for longer as opposed to escalating through tiers of services this is what we've done. Several factors have contributed to an overall reduction in demand for social work services which has linked to a corresponding rise in early help led intervention, currently 3,800 children and 1700 families being worked through early help. Our data highlights that we have influenced the systems that work with children, young people and their families and this is evidenced by the reduction to date of demand within the statutory social work service.

	Child in need plan	Child protection plans	Looked after children	Early help episodes
01/04/2018	1653	650	621	1585
01/04/2019	1409	507	640	1746
01/02/2020	1226	465	608	1697

2. Key Issues: What's Working Well / What are we worried about?

2.1 What's Working Well?

- There is a well-trained and motivated workforce across early help and children's social work services with a much-reduced reliance on agency social work staff
- Demand has reduced for social work led services
- Performance has been maintained across key performance indicators
- Audit work continues to provide positive feedback about the quality of practice
- Social care and early help services have worked more closely to review work and set plans for ongoing collaboration. Over 800 cases have jointly been reviewed over the past few months.
- The final phase of the three-year early help strategy was implemented on time in April 2019 and all associated budget savings were achieved. although this has seen a reduction in 33 FTE Early Help staff, it creates the foundation for the early help and social care pathway transformation work.
- The early help offer continues to be strong across the wider partnership with the number of early help assessments completed by partners rising over the past 3 months and now at 36.2% in December 2019 and around 24% year to date. The savings linked with the early help and social work pathway work have been achieved in 2019/20

2.2 What are we worried about?

- There is an increasing turnover of staff, particularly within case holding social work teams, this can be challenging when most applicants for social work posts are less experienced than those who leave the service
- The flow of work to first response is higher than comparator authorities meaning that although overall demand for social work led services is reducing, demand remains high within first response and for RMBC early help services
- We need to be sure that our quality of practice continues to improve and that we create an environment where our practitioners can be supported to do their best work

- Reduction of social work and early help workforce is closely aligned to caseload demand and can only be achieved when it is safe to do so – i.e. manageable caseloads maintained with a good level of managerial oversight remaining in place
- Caseloads of early help practitioners continues to rise as more cases are stepped down from social care or requested for co-working
- The management structure in early help has reduced from four heads of service to one, as part of the three-year strategy.

3. Key Actions and Timelines

- 3.1**
- Review of first response leading to a reduction in management and social work resource in the first response service – completed July 2019
 - Review of MASH and early help triage with new structure proposed – implementation was expected in Dec 2019 but a collective grievance has delayed this consultation to recommence w/c 24/02/20
 - Review of disability service leading to a reduction in management and social work resource and a redesign of the early help offer – completed July 2019
 - Review of the safeguarding, quality and learning service leading to a reduction of management posts and a reduction of reliance on external training – completed August 2019
 - Joint review work between social work locality teams and corresponding early help teams to maximise opportunities to step work down and ensure consistent thresholds – ongoing work report to DLT in April 2020
 - Review of the pathway for looked after children to ensure transfer of responsibility occurs at most appropriate point for the child – commence February 2020 recommendations April 2020
 - Mapping of anticipated flow of work against current figures, considering reductions achieved to date and data from comparator authorities to project future demand – initially completed October 2019 but being reviewed to take account of most up to date data
 - Gradual reduction of social work resource as demand for social work led services reduces, this will link directly principles around caseloads and managers having manageable spans of control – work commenced and ongoing over 20/21 and 21/22

4. Recommendations: What are we going to do about it?

- 4.1**
- Following resolution of the grievance undertake consultation process in relation to MASH restructure and implement agreed changes
 - Complete review work of social work locality teams and corresponding early help teams and use learning to inform future service delivery
 - Continue to learn from audit and other feedback so as we can showcase best practice enabling practitioners to learn from each other
 - Ensure that any reduction of social workers is in line with principles of manageable caseloads ensuring that reductions are made when it is safe to do so
 - Review recruitment process to ensure that we have a strong narrative about the positives of working for Rotherham so as we both retain and attract suitably experienced and qualified social workers in order that we can manage our turnover of staff effectively