

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

26 MAY 2016

UPDATE ON INTEGRATED FAMILY SUPPORT (AND EARLY HELP)

Report from: Ann Domenev - Assistant Director for Children's Services

Author: Andrew Willetts - Head of Integrated Family Support Services

Summary

This report is an update on the work going on to ensure that Medway targeted Early Help offer is as effective as possible and is designed to meet the needs of children, families and young people. It is the Council's role to enable, facilitate and stimulate Early Help support, though they are provided by a wide range of organisations and services. This paper describes the work to date to strengthen the system for supporting multi agency interventions and simplifying the system.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

- 1.1 The Council does not have a dedicated Early Help budget, but along with the CCG, NHS England, schools and colleges, the Council directly funds, trades or commissions a substantial number of services which are part of the overall offer.
- 1.2 The Council's contribution goes wider than the Children and Adults Directorate – Public Health, Housing and Community Safety play important roles in supporting vulnerable families, children and young people, with Public Health in particular playing an increasing role in identifying and supporting children and young people facing challenges.
- 1.3 Early Help provision has been developed through the learning and the highly successful Medway Action for Families (MAfF) initiative (Medway's response to the national 'Troubled Families Programme').

2. Background

- 2.1 The purpose of Early Help is, through prompt and targeted interventions, to prevent issues and problems becoming acute, chronic and costly to the child, young person, the family and the wider community.

- 2.2 We know that delivering Early Help (intervention and prevention) makes a difference. It can transform children's and families' lives by identifying and resolving difficulties before they escalate into a potentially unmanageable situation; and gives them the resilience they need to thrive without long term professional support. All services have a collective responsibility for Early Help.
- 2.3 Crucial to the success of Early Help is the way that practitioners work together, sharing information and coordinating their approach to ensure no duplication or unnecessary assessing of needs. The ethos for Early Help in Medway is for one worker, one whole family assessment and one whole family plan. This model also allows us to claim payment by results through the Troubled Families programme. The worker coordinates the interventions needed following the assessment and plan.
- 2.4 Crucial to the success of the work is the accurate reviewing and recording of progress. We are currently piloting a new assessment tool, the Early Help Assessment (EHA), with partners which will enable all family workers in Medway to consistently record their work. The pilot was trialled by the Family Support Service in Medway Council from September 2015 before being widened to include multi agency partners from January 2016. It currently consists of around 40 members comprising Schools, Children's Centres, Police, Youth Services, Voluntary and Community Services and Housing organisations. The new assessment will be rolled out across Medway late summer 2016.
- 2.5 The new EHA has been warmly welcomed by partners. Families have not reported any negative impact from their experiences. Feedback to date on the pilot is very positive: 'It's amazing' Temple Mill Primary School; 'very user friendly' St Margaret's Junior school.
- 2.6 A Early Help Steering Group has been formed to oversee the development of Early Help in Medway. The group reports to the MSCB twice a year and will provide an update on a number of specific developments. Additionally, the steering group will:
- Collectively seek solutions to challenges and problems in the local system. Identify best practice that will improve outcomes for children, young people and families and ensure dissemination across the Medway system. Receive updates from lead officers and provide support and challenge in order to secure continuous improvement.
 - The group agreed three main achievements it was aiming for. 1. Train the partnership workforce. 2. Increase awareness and take up of Early Help Assessments. 3. Oversee the quality of Early Help Assessments
- 2.7 An Early Help Strategy and Outcomes Framework are now in place (built on the Troubled Families Outcomes Plan) and this was launched in June 2015 in a series of multi-agency workshops. The strategy commits all services and agencies working with children, young people and families to help develop and sustain arrangements for collaborative Early Help interventions.
- 2.8 Early Help in Medway also incorporates the Government's national TF expanded programme which includes support to families across all four tiers

of need from universal services to those needing safeguarding. The Troubled Families programme qualifies families for support if they meet at least two out of six specific criteria across a range of needs.

3. Area based model

3.1 The Integrated Family Support Services (IFSS) are now working a virtual area based model and other teams (Child In Need and Child Protection) will be gradually aligned during 2016. This will enabling more seamless 'step-up' and 'step-down' planning that is child focused and promotes a 'never do nothing' approach.

3.2 Based on demographic data identifying the areas of greatest need, the locality areas we will be working in are:

Area & Wards

Gillingham & Twydall

Gillingham North
Gillingham South
Twydall

Luton & Rainham

Hempstead and Wigmore
Lordswood and Capstone
Luton and Wayfield
Princes Park
Rainham Central
Rainham North
Rainham South
Watling

Strood, Peninsula & Rochester West

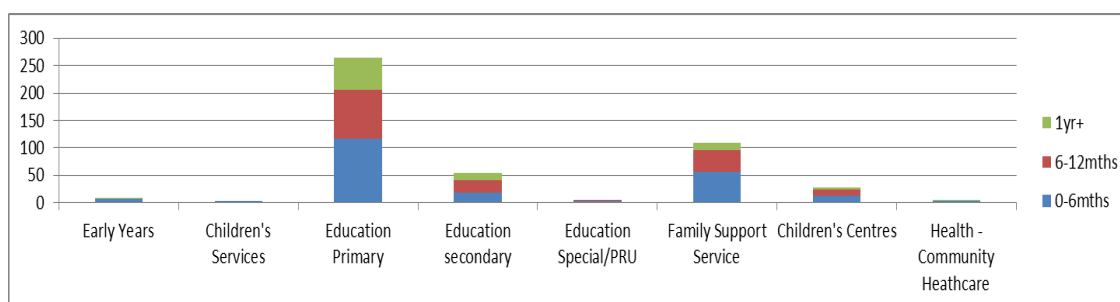
Cuxton & Halling
Peninsula
Rochester West
Strood North
Strood Rural
Strood South

Rochester East, Chatham & Walderslade

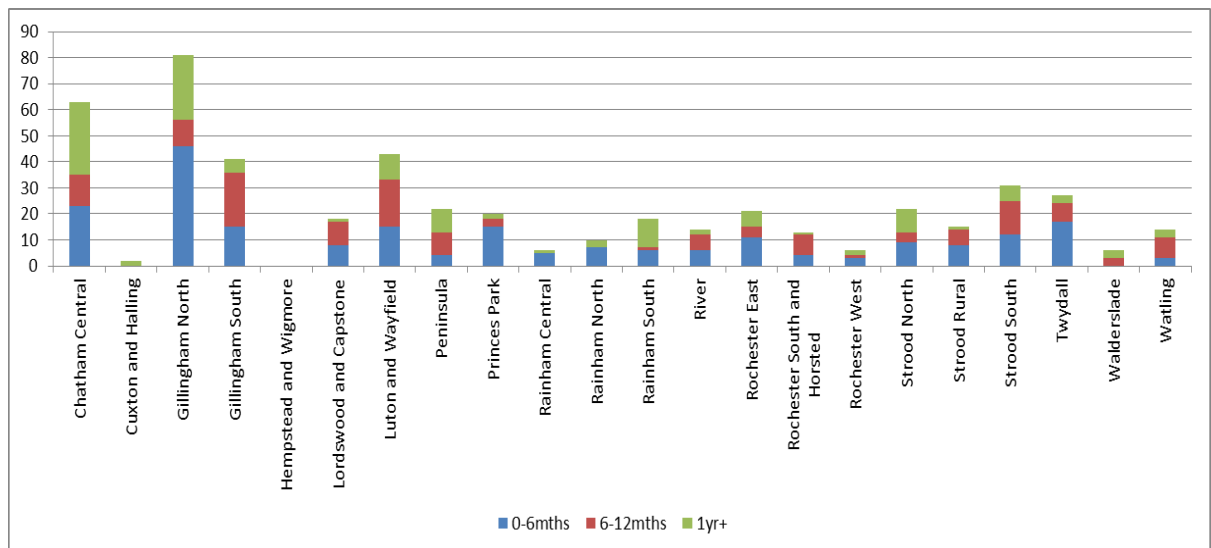
Chatham Central
River
Rochester East
Rochester South and Horsted

4. Response to families

- 4.1 Early Help is the appropriate response across a fairly wide spectrum of need, with most families' needs requiring the lower level of support, but others require more intensive support, such as that provided by IFSS and the Specialist Multi-Agency Response Team (SMART). We are currently in dialogue with partners about how we can further strengthen IFSS and SMART with partners working the same integrated model of work/ model.
- 4.2 Schools will play a crucial role in supporting families with lower level need and risk and we are looking to build stronger relationships and seek how we can better support our Schools.
- 4.3 Families with more complex needs are supported by IFSS/ SMART and the extension of the Troubled Families programme will increase the number of eligible families to 1,980 as part of a wider partnership endeavour to support this many families.
- 4.4 Responsibility for the support provided to Early Help partners in Medway sits within IFSS. This comprises harvesting and analysis of the data; development of processes and tools; development and delivery of training; support to partners in managing assessments, plans and a Team around the Family as well as supporting business transformation across the partnership.
- 4.5 IFSS has improved systematic sharing of information to provide a more complete picture of the family, to ascertain which other public services are working with that family and what their involvement is seeking to achieve.
- 4.6 The role of the Early Help Coordinators is to work with partner agencies within the community in Medway to encourage Early Help/ support in a timely and joined up approach. As might be expected a large proportion of our Lead Professionals are currently based within the education setting with a higher number being based within a primary setting. The graph below depicts Common Assessment Frameworks (CAF)/ Early Help Assessments (EHA) currently open by Service. We expect the proportion of CAF/ EHA to be more widely spread in the coming months and years.



- 4.7 Below you can see CAF/ EHA open by Ward Area with a large amount being open within the last six months (blue) since the expansion of the team to include four Early Help Co-ordinators linked to areas.



5. Priorities

- 5.1 Increase partners engagement and continue to develop learning events. This was a key learning theme from OFSTED.
- 5.2 Continue to clarify resources around both preventative and targeted work and ensure we are all using a common language and understand this as a partnership.
- 5.3 Strengthen relationships with Schools and Academies.
- 5.4 Review Children's Advice and Duty Service interface with Early Help Services ensuring we are making the right decision, for the right family, at the right time.

6. Next steps

- 5.1 Complete the 2nd phase of the Family Progress Data (FPD) evidencing the outcomes achieved with the families we are working with.
- 5.2 Work with partners to increase the use and awareness of the EHA ensuring we have a quality assurance mechanism to ensure EHA are good-outstanding.
- 5.3 Implement the family cost calculator which will show and evidence the savings the programme has made to support families with multiple and complex needs.
- 5.4 Review Early Help dashboard to ensure that the programme is no longer about a small Medway Action for Families (MAfF) team but a wider business transformation of Early Help support and system.
- 5.5 Collectively seek solutions to challenges and problems in the local system. Identify best practice that will improve outcomes for children, young people and families and ensure dissemination across the Medway system.
- 5.6 Train the wider partnership workforce in the new EHA.

5.7 Further develop the Specialist Multi Agency Support Team (SMART) further reducing risk and demand on the Local Authority Public Pound.

6. Implications for Looked After Children

6.1 All Children that meet the criteria under the Troubled Families criteria will fall under the programme.

7 Legal implications

7.1 All local authorities have a legal duty pursuant to section 10 of the Children Act 2004 to promote co-operation to improve the well-being of children in the authority's area, and Medway targeted Early Help offer is designed to meet the needs of children, families and young people in its area.

7.2 Medway Council must comply with its obligations to equalities under the Equality Act 2010, to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by this Act. It must advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people. This involves removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people, including taking steps to meet the needs of people who have a "protected characteristic" in the terms of this Act. It must encourage people from protected groups to participate in public life and other activities where their participation is disproportionately low. In order to comply with these equality duties, the Council is required to engage with service users and representative groups, and to use the information and views gathered to assess the equality impact of any proposals made by the Council in relation to service provision.

7.3 Medway Council processes Personal Data and Sensitive Personal Data in compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

8. Financial implications

8.1 Central Government funding for the Troubled Families programme is ring fenced. Delivery of the programme is met from within budgeted resources.

9. Recommendations

9.1 That the Committee note the progress to date and the further actions planned to establish a comprehensive, multi agency Early Help offer for children, young people and families in Medway.

Lead Officer:

Andrew Willetts, Head of Integrated Family Support Service

Tel: (01634) 338197

Email: andrew.willetts@medway.gov.uk

Appendices:

None

Background papers

None