

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

4 OCTOBER 2018

EARLY HELP AND TARGETED SERVICES

Report from: Ian Sutherland. Director for Children and Adults

Author: Andrew Willetts. Head Of Early Help and Targeted Services

Summary

This report is an update on the work to ensure that the multi-agency, whole system early help offer for Medway 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, which is provided by a wide range of organisations/ services and not just the Council. This report 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 Section 10 of the Children Act 2004 requires each local authority to make arrangements to promote cooperation between the authority, each of the authority's relevant partners and such other persons or bodies working with children in the local authority's area as the authority considers appropriate.
- 1.2 The arrangements are to be made, with a view to improving the wellbeing of all children in the authority's area, which includes protection from harm and neglect. As such, it is essential that there are clear expectations about good practice in relation to early help case management that need to be taken into account to ensure that all children and young people are able to thrive and meet their potential, which is in line with the priority in the Medway Council Plan 2016/21, 'supporting Medway's people to realise their potential'.

2. Background

- 2.1 Early help means taking action to support a child, young person or their family, early in the life of a problem, as soon as it emerges. It can be required at any stage in a child's life, from pre-birth to adulthood; and applies to a wide range of additional needs the family, child or young person cannot deal with on their own. The aim of early help is to reduce or eliminate the need for

support and to promote resilience in the child and family so that in future their needs can be met by universal services well.

- 2.2 Consequently, early help encompasses a wide range of services, agencies and practitioners, across the system from Health Visitors to Youth Workers, counselling services bought in by schools to family workers. It is therefore extremely important that early help services work together well, so that families, children and young people receive a coordinated offer, rather than sequential, packages of support, which meet their needs and build their resilience.
- 2.3 The governance of this work reports into the Medway Children's Safeguarding Board (MSCB).
- 2.4 Early Help is a multi-agency endeavor and this report sets out how we want to build a stronger framework for multi-agency, preventative work. Medway Early Help and Targeted Services has shaped itself ready to build a stronger model for this delivery and we have moved early help back into the community. See appendix 1 to 6 (listed at the bottom and attached to this report) for an update on specific Early Help and Targeted Services activity, the successes and next steps:

3. Options

- 3.1 With increasing expectations, the development of the Children and Family Hubs, and a draft 4 year strategy, it is important the we gain a commitment to this model and funding to ensure the improvements that have been made can continue and are sustained.

4. Advice and analysis

- 4.1 In regards to the current needs being presented in Medway, analysis of the previous 12 months of contact and referrals show:
 - 9971 contacts, of which 2812 were referrals, were received into the Local Authority spanning an age range of -1 to 24 years
 - 77% of all contacts made were already known to the Local Authority within the previous 12 months of contact being made
 - 23% of all contacts were new contacts (i.e. not known to the Local Authority)
- 4.2 The most commonly stated reasons for contact were those of Abuse and Neglect, totalling 48% of all contacts made. The second most common reason was Family Dysfunction and Acute Stress, totalling 24% of all contacts made combined. The sub-categories of contacts made can provide further detail; 21% of all contacts, stated Domestic Abuse as the main reason for contact, with 9% and 8% of all contacts stating neglect and physical abuse as the main reason for contact, respectively. Following this, Child Exhibiting Difficult Behaviour and Parental Difficulty in Managing Behaviour combined made up 7% of all contacts.

- 4.3 There does not seem to be any significant differential between age groups in regards to reason for contact, with the exception of Socially Unacceptable Behaviour which rose significantly in the 14-17 years age range, which may be reflective of the potential for increased periods of stress which often occur as the young person in the family reaches adolescence.
- 4.4 Overall, given the high levels of domestic abuse resulting in neglect and/or abuse with challenging behaviour are the most common reason for contact, it could be concluded that early intervention at a family level would be the most significant prevention factor in supporting families in need.
- 4.5 Geographically, the highest levels of contact made were found in the Gillingham North area, with the least amount of contacts made stemming from the Rainham Central area. In terms of reasons for contact, it is noted that domestic abuse and neglect were fairly consistent across three of the four children's services designated areas with Rochester West, Strood, Cuxton and Halling and Peninsula recording the lowest amount of contacts for this category.
- 4.6 Similarly, the highest rate of children being diagnosed with emotional or behavioural difficulties was also found in this geographical area. However, Rochester West, Strood, Cuxton and Halling and Peninsula held the highest level of contact due to physical and sexual abuse. Gillingham and Twydall possessed the highest levels of recorded problems related to homelessness, with the Rochester West, Strood etc. area displaying the lowest homelessness-related contact. Children displaying difficult behaviour and parents finding it difficult to manage challenging behaviour was consistent across all areas.

5. Risk management

- 5.1 Risk management is an integral part of good governance. The Council has a responsibility to identify and manage threats and risks to achieve its strategic objectives and enhance the value of services it provides to the community.

| Risk | Description | Action to avoid or mitigate risk | Risk rating |
|---|--|--|-------------|
| Payment by results: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Political risks - Financial implications | Troubled families programme. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Doesn't achieve target set for 2020 - Recognise the payment by results funding against the programme | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Revised outcomes plan. - Recovery plan with greater scrutiny through lead member, CEO and children's services delivery board. | Medium |

6. Implications for Looked After Children

- 6.1 Early Help provision will extend its offer to some of our most vulnerable groups, for example:
- One stop shop for LAC NEET (Not in Education, Employment and Training) and also apprenticeships
 - Deliver edge of care and risk of placement breakdown work

7. Financial implications

- 7.1 Any future changes will need to be made within the available budget, which includes funding received from Central Government (example Troubled Families).

8. Legal implications

- 8.1 Local authorities, under section 10 of the Children Act 2004, have an on-going responsibility to promote inter-agency cooperation to improve the welfare of children, of which Early Help is an important factor.

9. Recommendations

- 9.1 The committee note the work undertaken over last 12 months and the progress made in all areas of Early Help and Targeted Services.
- 9.2 The Committee agree that a further report be presented regarding the Early Help Strategy, a review of progress against next steps, evidence of impact and effectiveness (particularly around new arrangements in the hubs) and scrutinise the future programme arrangements.

Lead officer contact

Andrew Willetts, Head Of Early Help and Targeted Services.

Tel: 01634 338197

Email: Andrew.willetts@medway.gov.uk

Appendices

1. Brief summary on the draft early help strategy
2. Attendance and Inclusions
3. The Youth Offending Team
4. The Youth Service
5. The Children and Family Hubs
6. The Early Help Transformation Team

Background papers

None

Appendix 1: Early Help Strategy

As the Head Of Service for Early Help and Targeted Services, I am delighted we have a draft 4 year Early Help Strategic plan for 2018-2022, which reflects our successes as an organisation keeping early intervention and prevention in the heart of what we do. The plan sets out how we will continue to deliver high quality, high performing youth and family services over the next 4 years.

This has been evident in the Council's commitment in taking a strategic decision not to reduce the budget but aligned the Early Help hubs/ children and family services/ children centres, strengthening a response to how we deliver this work.

In summary:

- At the heart of this success is the commitment and skill of practitioners, drawn together from an array of different disciplines and professional backgrounds, all of whom are intent upon making a difference to their community through their work. However, we must not allow ourselves to become complacent about our successes, given that over the next 1-2 years further challenges are anticipated, with reductions in public service budgets.

Therefore, as an Early Help System, we wholeheartedly believe that a longer-term plan is essential to provide the foresight and resilience required to enable us to sustain our strong performance and further reform key areas of Early Intervention and Prevention locally and regionally.

At the heart of our strategy and plan is an unswerving commitment to:

- Deliver an effective system as a partnership that our partners and families understand
- Optimise relevant skill, knowledge and resources through joint action, rather than developing a plan that centres largely upon the activities of a single service.

Our plan clearly sets out how we will deliver against the core objectives of an Early Help System to:

- Reduce those needing statutory intervention (safeguarding) and support families achieve
- Improve school attendance and reduce exclusions from school
- Increase positive activities and places for young people to go and achieve
- Prevent and reduce youth crime

A special note of thanks to Medway Youth Council for their time in considering the report and their recommendations

Next steps:

Once there is a final draft of the strategy, this is to be presented to the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Appendix 2: Inclusions and attendance

Inclusions Team

There is unanimous agreement in the Local Authority and in School leadership that exclusion rates need to be reduced and that this should be a key priority. Important reviews of AP and exclusions are taking place in parliament and the DfE. Rates of exclusion in Medway are exceptionally high and cannot fully be explained by levels of deprivation or the existence of selective schools in the community.

The greatest concern are fixed-term exclusions from primary schools, which were the highest in England in 2015-2016, and permanent exclusions in secondary schools, which had the 10th highest rate in England in the same year, the most recent for which national statistics are available.

In both sectors, numbers of children receiving more than one fixed-term exclusion are significantly high. There is variability in Medway: eight primary schools account for half of all fixed-term exclusions and five secondary schools made two thirds of all permanent exclusions.

Schools feel that unaddressed SEND needs and insufficient agency support are root causes. The recent inspection of SEND in Medway has made critical observations of exclusion rates.

Looking at all permanent exclusions for 2016 and 2017, Medway has shown a 22% improvement against nationals 25% increase. Medway's gap behind national is narrowing, now 40% behind previously 125%, over 3 times the size. This has led to an improvement of 27 places, moving from being ranked 136th to 109th. Over the 5 year period, nationally there has been an increase of 67% compared to Medway's 55% increase. If Medway's rate of permanent exclusions continues to improve, or continues to increase at the current rate, Medway could well achieve better than national. Based on local provisional data for 2017/18 and the current national rate of increase, Medway is set to be in line or better than national.

Medway has maintained 0 exclusions within Special schools for over 5 years.

Within Secondary schools, Medway has shown an 11% improvement against nationals 11% increase. Medway's gap behind national is narrowing, now 38% behind previously 72%, nearly halving the gap. This has led to an improvement of 13 places, now ranked 131st as opposed to 144th. If both the Medway rate and national rate continued on this trend, Medway will be in line with national by 2019. Despite the improvement on the previous year, Medway's 5 year performance has improved by 78% against nationals 67% improvement.

Medway has secured external funding via the Regional Schools Commissioner to work with senior leaders within education and has completed an independent review of exclusions in Medway. Work is also being progressed specifically on a project for inclusion targeting primary schools, funded by the Strategic School Improvement Fund.

Next steps:

- Working group established to take forward the delivery of a system change model in how the local authority, Schools/ academies and alternative provision address future exclusions focusing on key priorities identified through the review.
- Working with the department of education on future model and funding formula to change the culture within Medway and further impact on exclusions
- Continue to work with School improvement on the transition programme between year 6 and year 7.

Attendance

Medway's overall absence for all schools (Primary, Secondary and Special schools combined score) has shown a decrease. This is against the national increasing trend leading to an improvement on rank of 33 places. Medway is now in line with national for the overall rate of absence, previously 4% above national. Over the 5 year period both Medway and national have shown an 11% improvement.

In Medway the rate of absence in Primary schools has remained static for the 3rd year running, in line with the national trend. Medway remains above the national rate but has shown an improvement in rank of 4 places.

The rate of absence in secondary schools has shown an improvement, against the national increasing trend. This improvement has led to an improvement of rank of 35 places. Medway is below national for the first time since being in line in 2013.

Medway's most marked improvement comes from the overall absence in special schools, showing a 4% improvement on the previous year and now ranked 8th out of all authorities. This is despite national showing a 7% increase. Medway's absence in this measure has been consistently below national in the 5 year period.

Since September 2013 (academic year 2014), headteachers no longer have the discretion to approve absences of up to 10 days a year for family holidays as part of a tougher regime of "exceptional circumstances" limiting authorised absence.

Next steps:

- Continue to operate a traded service to Schools and Academies.
- Monitor Schools and Academies that don't purchase the service and review their improvement on attendance.
- Review the impact on penalty notices issued.
- Complete an audit review on processes.

Appendix 3: Youth Offending Team

Medway was part of the new HMIP inspection framework testing the new national framework which was rolled out this April. Medway was reviewed at the point of the pilot to be doing well and we are 'effective in our delivery of work'. There were many positives that are sadly not published and are restricted to public access. However, Medway YOT was part of the Joint Targeted Area Inspection. This inspection highlighted that Medway YOT:

- Provide a consistently strong service to children with safeguarding concerns and those who are living with domestic abuse. This is supported by a stable and experienced workforce with good access to appropriate training.
- The re-establishment of a police officer post within the team has also been a positive development.
- The introduction of a new and more child-centred planning process is an example of such good practice. Plans are developed jointly with children and are themed in line with their interests or hobbies. Plans include questions about what young people want to achieve and how they will show that they have addressed problematic areas relating to their lifestyle and offending which were raised at the initial referral order panel. This encourages them to take ownership of their sentence plan. The plan is held in a portfolio of achievement that is regularly updated with them. This approach is young-people friendly and strengths-based but can also manage risk and vulnerability well.
- It uses the 'external controls' component of the national assessment tool appropriately. Inspectors saw how it was used well, to engage some harder-to-reach children and young people.
- The YOT has effective and strong leadership at the Youth Justice Partnership Board

Medway implementation of the Desistance model has seen us recognised by the Youth Justice Board and Inspection bodies. We are seen as an area of best practice and the current Head of Service has been asked to be part of the national implementation.

The designated Social Worker roles in Cookhamwood are now settled and linked to the safeguarding team with improved working relationships now established. On recent meetings with colleagues from the YJB and the YOI, the casework team changes have been positive and the transition has gone very well.

Next steps:

- Deliver against the improvement plan (overseen by the Youth Justice Partnership Board) to get Medway to Outstanding by 2019.
- Continue to deliver against the strategic action plan (review 2020).
- Work with the national lead on desistance model and ensure this is embedded into practice.

Appendix 4: Youth Service

Recent research by the Social Mobility Commission showed extra-curricular activities such as sport, reading and cultural pursuits are associated with higher cognitive ability, educational attainment and higher rates of university applications. Such activities are particularly beneficial to young people in disadvantaged communities. Researchers at the University of Oxford found pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds that were high achievers were nearly twice as likely as other disadvantaged children to have enjoyed a reasonable number of enrichment activities, such as visits to libraries or playing sports.

Engaging in individual activities like painting, reading and dancing almost doubled the chances of disadvantaged children being high achievers at the end of Key Stage 2, and the experience of enrichment activities during Key Stage 3 of secondary school increased more than threefold the likelihood of those students going on to attain four or more AS-levels.

Young people need our help now more than ever before. In Medway we see an increase and risk around Child Sexual Exploitation, Gangs and breakdown in family homes and we need to act now. We need to improve the aspiration and qualification for our young people and improve the behaviors and attitudes.

Youth Centres are designed to give young people aged 8–19 years old (25 for those with a disability) somewhere to go, something to do and someone to talk to in their leisure time; occupying their bodies and minds with fun activities, learning new skills and socialising in a safe, positive way.

We want our youth work provision:

- Open 7 days a week, 52 weeks a year
- Driven by a powerful combination of public, private and volunteer sector support.
- Visited by over hundreds of young people every week
- Modern youth clubs offering a wide range of sport, art and enterprise activities including learning and citizen programmes
- An inspiring, safe and affordable place for young people to go
- A private sector-led Board, heading up an independent local charity
- A sustainable funding model that achieves significant outcomes for our Children and Young People.

Medway Youth Service continue to have busy centres supporting young people in the community.

The youth service also delivers the information, advice and guidance service, supporting young people who are NEET (Not in Education, Training or Employment). This is working well and we have seen improvements in the delivery and also our ability to monitor and track young people both known and unknown. This is a key piece of work monitored through the 'skills board' and 'Employment Opportunities for 18-25 Year Olds (including apprenticeships) Task Group'.

The Youth Service ran its first awards night earlier this year, which was a great success working alongside Medway Youth Council to make this event a reality.

Medway continues to complete the return interviews for young people that have been missing. This is working well and needs to continue as the best practice sees an independent person undertake this work.

The youth service has also been heavily involved in some of the targeted delivery of gangs work both in Schools/ Academies, the youth centres and also in the community (street based work).

Medway has also been doing some edge of care work and also placement work, and to date, we are yet to see a child fall back into the care of the local authority.

We continue to work with community organisations and the links with the Salvation Army and the Pentagon Centre are two recent examples of exciting planned work going on that will have an impact on the high street, the community and young people's outcomes.

Next steps:

- For some of this to work, we need a four-way partnership between the private sector, the local authority, young people and the community. We need to reconsider the youth work and its provision to ensure we work in the right community location, in neutral territory that all young people from the community can share.
- We need a functional, inspirational building design, based on how young people engage, socialise and participate.
- Continue to develop our targeted programmes for employability, mentoring, inclusion, sexual health, edge of care and custody with a specific focus on care leavers.

Appendix 5: Children and Family Hubs (and wellbeing centres)

Children and Family Hubs offer families with children places to meet new people. Our centres/ hubs ensure that all children get the best start in life and parents get the support and advice they need. At our children and family hubs we offer:

- drop-in sessions for parents and children with activities including music, play and story time
- antenatal classes and baby clinics
- support for parents thinking about training or finding a new job
- links with local schools and voluntary agencies
- information and advice about breastfeeding, speech and language, parenting, health issues and all difficult experiences that families with babies and young children often face

Our hubs are supported by nine Children and Family Wellbeing Centres which are based in primary schools. There is also work ongoing, in the community and in people's own homes. The hubs will help us to meet our duties to reduce inequality by helping the most vulnerable children and families.

For additional information, please see:

https://www.medway.gov.uk/info/200170/children_and_families/323/choosing_childcare/4

Where the Council made decision to integrate Early Years with Early Help, we are seeing real positives in the delivery of work and outcomes for children and families. We have reduced duplication and improved decision making in pathways and we are more robust offering the right service to the right family at the right time.

Partnership work continues to be a key area of delivery especially with our health partners. We continue to strengthen this relationship and recently agreed for NELFT to operate within the hubs bringing their work closer to the community.

The new Early Help Social Workers are now in post and we are soon to appoint a new Domestic Abuse Lead and a vulnerabilities lead

Next steps:

- Hold open days for our partners and the community to further understand the offer at the children and family hubs.
- Continue to work with our partners on a wider delivery model.
- Further train staff in level 4 (NVQ), solution focused and strengthening families models of practice.
- Develop lead roles in DA and vulnerabilities (gangs, CSE and MISPERs).
- Audit of cases for teams to understand learning and practice improvement.

Appendix 6: Early Help Transformation

We have seen an increase in the training programme and the delivery and uptake from partners. The feedback continues to be outstanding. Alongside this, we have developed a new system (synergy) that creates the ability for the recording, reporting and outcomes achieved being in one place for those families falling under early help.

We continue to see an increase in Early Help Assessments, and increase in step down's from children services and we have seen this year a reduction in those being re-referred to children's services after 12 months intervention from early help.

We continue to deliver against the target set for 2018 in relation to the troubled families programme. This is important due to the financial formula attached to the programme.

Next steps:

- Continue to promote the use of synergy with partners (or establish possible links through systalk).
- Continue to monitor the troubled families programme ensuring we continue to meet the targets set for the next 18 months improving the payment by result position.