
Children's Services Scrutiny Committee – 21st January 2015

Report of the Interim Director of Children's Services

Early Help and Support

Purpose of Report

1. To update Children's Services Scrutiny Committee on Early Help and Support

Background

2. The provision of Early Help and Support to Children, Young People and their families is the responsibility of all partner agencies; this shared commitment is reflected as a single priority in the Children and Young People's Plan 2015 – 17, endorsed by the Health and Wellbeing board and entrusts Partners to provide:
 - a) high quality universal services as early as possible in the lives of all children and young people to help them to optimise their potential and to live healthy lives in the future.
 - b) effective targeted and specialist early help and support to vulnerable children and young people and their families will help to reduce the risks which this group face of suffering harm, neglect and poor health, with all the negative consequences of such experiences for educational attainment and social and economic well being.
 - c) early help and support services that are more effective with the aim of reducing the number of inappropriate contacts to children's social care and enabling children and young people to remain safely within their family by preventing problems escalating further.
3. How the Local Authority delivers early help and support is a key judgement in the Ofsted Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers. Dudley Local Authorities last inspect was 2011 and we are anticipating a further inspection in 2015.
4. This shared priority is illustrated in the collaborative work currently in progress focussing upon the redesign of the Early Help offer and the development of an integrated approach to access arrangements for service delivery via an integrated 'One Stop' access hub for children's services, a 'Single Front Door' model. A multi-agency colocated team will receive and screen referrals from the public and professionals for an Early Help assessment, redirect to universal, targeted or refer on to specialist services diverting inappropriate referrals away from Children's Social Care. It is envisaged that this service will go live from the 1st April 2015.
5. Children's Services Family Support are progressing a service delivery model consistent with Early Help and Support for children aged 0 – 18 years (or some eligible groups to

25). Services are working together and in partnership to provide vulnerable families with consistent responses to identified and assessed need. The aim is to identify and respond to problems early, help families strengthen their resilience, improve effective parenting skills to prevent problems escalating and divert families away from high cost public services.

Children's Centres

6. A redesign of Family Support Services is now required to bring about this whole system change, to one that embodies Early Help and builds upon the success of the Troubled Families Programme. The aim of the whole system change is to develop multi agency teams who are able to work across agency and professional boundaries, focussed upon tackling whole family problems in order to help families address unmet health and social need, improve their parenting skills, improve school attendance, attainment and aspiration, reduce anti social and offending behaviour and help adults get into work therefore reducing the associated social and financial cost.
7. Central government guidance requires Children's Centres to focus much more effectively on those families in greatest need with an emphasis on:
 - a. Child development and school readiness
 - b. Parenting aspirations and parenting skills
 - c. Child and family Health and life chances
8. Children's Centres deliver services on a cluster basis, and are specifically targeted to engage families from most disadvantaged areas taking into account the specific needs within the population. Robust data systems are in place to support identification and engagement of vulnerable or at risk groups referred to Children's Centres and risk assessments are undertaken and monitored regularly.
9. All children who access children's centre services have an Early Help assessment and where there is emerging or unmet need, a support plan is developed with the parents in order to help the development of parenting skills and tackle problems as they emerge in order to prevent these problems escalating or becoming entrenched.
10. Direct one to one family support is provided within the family's own home, as well as supporting parents to access group activities and support within the Children's Centre and local community for example Stay and Play and Family Links Nurturing Parenting Program. Each Children's Centre has an identified lead officer for Family Support and Parenting.
11. Positive Parenting Program (PPP) practitioners are based at Kateshill Children's Centre within the Family Intervention (Troubled Families) Team and Health visiting team. Parenting practitioners have delivered evidenced based parenting programmes with parents / carers from across the borough for parents with children aged between 2 – 11 years and a group teen program for parents with children aged between 11 – 16 years.
12. Children's Services and Public Health are currently delivering further PPP training to professionals across the Borough to increase the pool of practitioners and maximise programme delivery to strengthen and increase the delivery of this programme to targeted parents.

13. A health strategy is in place with Public Health to reduce obesity and improve healthy lifestyles within families, using evidenced based programmes for example 'Get Cooking' in order to support and encourage healthy eating within families.
14. Strong links are developing between Children's Centres and Family Learning, they are increasingly working together to provide adult learning courses for parents to facilitate the development of key skills and improve their employment chances.
15. Other partnerships include Family Nurse Partnership, Respect - Young Parents Group, and services provided through Citizens Advice Bureau and Job Centre Plus are all targeted to meet identified needs of families.
16. Children's Centre staff work alongside Social Care staff to offer enhanced support to children when their unmet need increases and may require intervention as a 'Child in Need' or as a child who is subject to a 'Child Protection Plan'. Children's Centre staff provide additional support to children and families as they 'Step Down' from Social Care intervention and support.

Early Years Foundation Stage

17. The purpose of funded early education for two year olds is to improve the educational outcomes to some of the most disadvantaged two year olds living in the borough. Local authorities have a duty to secure early education for eligible two-year-olds and as far as possible early learning for two-year-olds is delivered by providers who have achieved an overall rating of 'outstanding' or 'good' in their most recent Ofsted inspection report.
18. Local authority early years advisers and nationally recognised early years experts have provided professional development opportunities for staff working with two year olds in order to improve the quality of childcare provision. This has included central training and on-site support through audits and coaching and modelling sessions for staff in order to increase their professional knowledge and confidence particularly in the areas of child development, observation and assessment, planning and resourcing.
19. There is an expectation that each setting assesses the level of development of each child in terms of his/her personal, social, emotional, physical and language developmental progress, plans activities and interventions to address any areas of concern and ensure that children are supported to reach appropriate age-related milestones in order to ensure as many as possible are 'school ready' in the future by tracking and reviewing their progress and amending plans accordingly.
20. Central Government provide funding based upon take up of funded two year old placements. In the autumn term of 2014, 39% of eligible places were taken up by parents in Dudley, contrasting with the England average of 55%. A marketing campaign is underway to improve this take-up of the funded educational entitlement.

Multi-cultural Support Service

21. Multi-cultural Support Service (MSS) provides children and families newly arrived and minority cultural groups with support focused on achieving school engagement and improved attainment.
22. The local authority has a statutory duty to:
 - a) make available education for all nursery and school age children resident in their area whether permanently or temporary

- b) facilitate continuity of a child's education through Children of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) Families –or Children Missing Education (CME) officer support
 - c) ensure that eligible two-year-old children, and all three- and four-year-old children moving to England from another country can access a place on the same basis as any other child in the local authority area.
 - d) promote equality and inclusion
 - e) encourage take-up of early education places and undertake outreach activities to identify children who are not taking up their full hours and support them to do so
23. Once a school placement is identified the team provide support to students as they transition into school, and can provide targeted support to teaching staff to enable students to access the curriculum and improve their attainment.
24. Multi Cultural Support Service staff supported 58 pupils in their school setting in the 2013/14 academic year from seventeen different nationalities. The team also received referrals for 37 Newly Arrived Families (NAFs) seeking school placements, 17 children were from 7 Eastern European countries, indicating a demographic profile change that is impacting locally upon schools. The duration of support to students will depend upon the complexity of each child's circumstances, ranging from a few months up to 18 months.
25. Multi Cultural Support Service work in partnership with other services including Social Care, Housing, Children Missing Education, DACHs and Connexions to provide support to families.
26. Family Learning and Multi Cultural Support Service work together to ensure that Newly Arrived Parents are enrolled on appropriate adult learning provision including basic English to improve parent's key skills and therefore their employment chances and community engagement and access.

Early Help Assessment Support

27. Early Help Assessment Support (CAF) Officers continue to support partners with assessments and support plans, as we move forward into the Early Help single front door operating model in April 2015, these officers will be colocated within the Early Help hub to offer partners and professionals advice, support and signposting to services.

Early Intervention Social Workers

28. Early Intervention Social Workers (EISW) provide targeted Early Help to Children in Need and their families to enable more persistent and established problems to be resolved by a coordinated Child in Need assessment, planning, intervention and review in order to divert children and families safely away from Social Care.
29. Early Intervention Social Workers work closely with social workers in Social Care to enable children and young people to 'Step Down' from Child Protection Plans and to support a return home for Looked After Children where reunification is in the child or young person's best interests and identified within the Care Plan.
30. Early Intervention Social Worker's are to be line managed by a Children's Centre Cluster manager from February 2015 and will provide social work support, advice and guidance to the five Children's Centre Clusters and local schools. A duty rota will enable an Early Intervention Social Worker to be available at the Early Help hub to offer referrers and partners professional advice and guidance.

Integrated Youth Support

31. Currently, services within Integrated Youth identify, engage and assess young people from aged 13 years (Youth Offending Service from aged 10 Years) up to 18 years (up to 25 years for young people with a learning and/or disability). Individual services within Integrated Youth Support accept referrals mainly from schools and intensively support young people 'at risk'. Professionals will always work hard to prevent young people from being stepped up into more targeted services such as Social Care.
32. We are re-shaping Integrated Youth Support to become one service a strand of the new service will be Targeted Early Support. This team will be split into five cluster areas and professionals from each of the disciplines within Integrated Youth Support will be placed so a multi professional team will be operating within each area. In some circumstances young people will be stepped up into the targeted team. Also young people who have been supported by the targeted team can also be stepped down into the Early Help Team. This is to ensure we have sufficient pathways to support young people at all times.
33. The team will receive referrals in a number of ways these being:
 - Through the one door duty team where appropriate. A member of the Integrated Youth Support Team will be supporting the one door duty desk and will feed appropriate referrals through into the Targeted Early Help Team.
 - It is also envisaged that a current identification tool be developed to capture all the needs of 'at risk' young people. This tool is currently called a RONI (Risk of NEET Indicator) and used in all secondary schools.
 - Self referrals and referrals from parents/carers.
34. The new team will start receiving referrals from aged 11 years (Youth Offending Service function from aged 10 years). There are questions at the moment as to whether the new team should support young people up to 25 years instead of up to 18 years (25yrs if the young person has a Learning Difficulty or Disability).

Finance

35. A number of funding streams are available to the Directorate of Children's Services to deliver the Early Help and Support provision, as detailed in this report.
36. The grant funding streams available include the Department of Communities & Local Government (DCLG) Troubled Families Grant, the Department for Education (DfE) Two Year Old Nursery Education element of the Dedicated Schools Grant and the Youth Justice Board (YJB) Youth Offending Grant.
37. The partner funding streams are from Public Health, Police & Crime Commission, Probation Service, Police Service, Dudley College and STEMNET (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Network- Education Business Partnership).
38. The remaining element of the programme is funded by the Directorate of Children's Services through their recurrent base budget provision.

Law

39. The provision of Early Help and Support to Children, Young People and their families is the responsibility of all partner agencies; this shared commitment is reflected as a single priority in the Children and Young People's Plan 2015 – 17, endorsed by the Health and Wellbeing Board.

Equality Impact

40. This report takes into account the Council's Equality and Diversity Policy.

Recommendations

41. Children's Services Scrutiny Committee receive and comment on the report.
42. Children's Services Scrutiny Committee identify any other areas of community work which they consider could contribute to this area of work.



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Pauline Sharratt
Interim Director of Children's Services

Contact Officer: Annette Callear
 Divisional Lead – Family Support
 Telephone: 01384 81 4292
 Email: annette.callear@dudley.gov.uk