



To: Education and Children's Service Scrutiny Board (2)

Date: 10 December 2015

Subject: Early Help and Partnership Working

1 Purpose of the Note

- 1.1 To bring the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board up to date with progress on Early Help and Prevention.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Board are recommended to:
- 1) Receive further progress reports
 - 2) Note the change to the Troubled Families Programme which will now be called Strengthening Families programme and will be accountable to the Early Help Board
 - 3) Note the progress achieved to date on the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) Strengthening Families programme within Coventry and acknowledge the challenges faced for phase 2 as outlined in Appendix 2 of this report
 - 4) Identify any further recommendations for the appropriate Cabinet Member.

3 Our Coventry context

- 3.1 Coventry is a city of around 329,800 residents with 83,800 of whom are aged 0-19 years old (2012). The population is younger than the average for England, the average age of a Coventry resident being 34 compared to 40 overall in England. The city is ethnically diverse, with 33% of Coventry's inhabitants coming from ethnic minority communities compared to 20% for England as a whole. Deprivation is higher than the England average; 25.9% (16,400) children live in poverty.
- 3.2 The majority of Coventry children and young people are safe at home and in the community, do well at school and are healthy. However, we have high numbers of children who are known to social care and have a Children in Need Plan, Child Protection Plans or are Looked After and high numbers of troubled families (Strengthening Families programme) compared to our statistical neighbours. The 'toxic trio' of domestic violence, mental health issues and drug and alcohol abuse are significant issues for some Coventry parents, which impacts on their children. Some families have deeply entrenched multi-generational problems.
- 3.3 The high levels of demand for specialist services lead to significant financial costs against a backdrop of significant public sector financial pressures. This combination of high service demand and financial challenges underline the importance of delivering effective Early Help. Our aim is for a redirection of resources from high cost, high intervention services to prevention and early intervention support and services. This benefits families and is a better use of finite resources.

4 Our vision for children and young people

- 4.1 Coventry's vision is of a city that promotes economic growth and jobs and protects the most vulnerable. Children and young people are at the heart of this. They are important to our city now and into the future. Our vision for children and young people is for:

Coventry children and young people to have supportive families, live safe from harm, fulfill their potential; live healthy, positive and fulfilling lives¹.

We want children and young people to enjoy their childhood and adolescent years and to grow up to be responsible citizens, contributing to our city.

5 What is Early Help

- 5.1 Early Help is an approach to maximise the chances of this vision becoming real for every Coventry child and young person aged 0-19 years old and up to 25 years old for young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. Early Help is a way of working that supports children in the early years of their lives, or early on in the emergence of a problem at any stage in their lives. Our definition of Early Help is one that can practically be applied by any professional in any context. Our definition of early help is to:

- **Reach children, young people and families when the need first emerges; and**
- **Intervene when you can have the most impact.**

6 Why Early Help is important

- 6.1 Early Help is a high priority nationally and in Coventry for two key reasons.
- 6.2 Firstly, effective early help has a positive impact on the lives of children and young people. This has been evidenced through several reviews² - led by Graham Allen MP, Rt Hon Frank Field, Dame Claire Tickell, Professor Eileen Munro, Sir Michael Marmot in addition to Working Together (2015) and work by the Centre for excellence in outcomes (C4E0).
- 6.3 Sir Michael Marmot underlined the significance of early help in the following way, "Giving every child the best start in life is crucial for securing health and reducing health inequalities across the life course. The foundations for virtually every aspect of human development – physical, intellectual and emotional – are laid in early childhood. What happens during these early years, starting in the womb, has life-long effects on many aspects of health and well-being".
- 6.4 Secondly, effective Early Help has a positive impact on public finances in a context of significant financial pressures. Effective early help reduces the demand for higher cost services. Conversely late help has a high human cost and a high financial cost. Indeed the Early Intervention Foundation report estimated a £17bn national cost of late intervention. Our aim is for a redirection of our finite resources from high cost, high intervention services to prevention and early intervention support and services. In this context, there is a strong motivation to get Early Help right in Coventry.

7 The principles of how we will work together

- 7.1 The way that we work together is important. The following guiding principles set out the way we strive to work with families, together as practitioners:

¹ Coventry Children and Young People Plan 2010-2014

² Reviews include: Early Intervention: The Next Steps. An Independent Report to her Majesty's Government (2011), Graham Allen MP; The Foundation Years: Preventing Poor Children from Becoming Poor Adults (2010), Frank Field; The Early Years: Foundations for Life, Health and Learning (2011), Dame Claire Tickell, The Monro Review of Child Protection (2011), Professor Eileen Munro; and The Marmot Review (2010)

- The experience, wellbeing and the voice of children and young people is central to everything we do so children are safe.
- Effective Early help is the responsibility of everyone in Coventry. This includes organisations working directly with children, young people and families such as schools, Children's Services Coventry City Council, Coventry and Rugby Clinical Commissioning Group, Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership Trust and community and voluntary organisations and groups.
- Parents have the primary responsibility for the care and development of their children and for their growing up in a loving environment where there are strong attachments. The family is the primary resource. We believe that most parents want the best for their children. We will build trusting relationships with parents in order to support them and to build on the strengths and skills they have to bring up their children.
- We will work with the whole family and recognise the uniqueness and diversity of each family and family member.
- We will work with families to enable the development of positive extended family, personal and community networks so that families access positive informal support.
- We will work with families to identify needs and root causes rather than with presenting issues at the earliest opportunity.
- We will deliver and target the right evidence-based support, at the right time and will flexibly endeavour to ensure the best outcomes for children, young people and their families. We will stick with families rather than just referring on.
- We will regularly evaluate the impact of our work with individual families and learn from this through measuring success outcomes of interventions delivered and seeking feedback from children and families on their perceptions of the effectiveness of work with them.
- We will involve families in shaping, designing and delivering support and services.
- We will use shared resources and assets more effectively and creatively together. This includes buildings, finances and most significantly people – the strengths of families and professionals

8 Strategic Objectives

- To identify the needs of children, young people and their families across the continuum of need.
- To understand and respond quickly to the needs of children and young people and families across the continuum of need.
- To support the refocusing of resources from crisis intervention to prevention.
- To support families to achieve their full potential and thereby mitigate the impact of issues such as child poverty and health inequalities.
- To support an action learning approach that ensures that learning and evidence informs future service design and delivery. This includes listening to what children and families have to say about what best helps them to prevent problems from occurring or escalating.
- To provide the context for multi-agency partnerships to work together to improve outcomes for children, young people and families for generations to come.

9 How will we know Early Help is working?

- 9.1 The overall aim is to develop a cohesive Early Help offer embedded within a Whole Family approach, that builds protective factors and family resilience, (enables families to help themselves) and reduces expenditure of costly reactive services. Our ambition is that families, particularly those with multiple and complex needs will have access to co-ordinated Early Help in accordance with need as soon as difficulties are identified.
- 9.2 The offer is personalised, multi-agency, and evidenced based. Children and young people in those families will live safe, healthy and fulfilling lives and develop into responsible adult citizens, thereby breaking the intergenerational cycles of risk and vulnerability. Families will become more resilient and develop capabilities to prevent and resolve problems. The aim is to reduce demand for higher cost specialist services and achieve greater use of community based universal preventive services.
- 9.3 Social capital and resilience within local communities will be identified and enhanced.

10 Early Help measures

- 10.1 There are a wide range of important measures that are indicators of the effectiveness of early help. We have identified the following measures that we will particularly focus on to measure the effectiveness of our combined efforts:

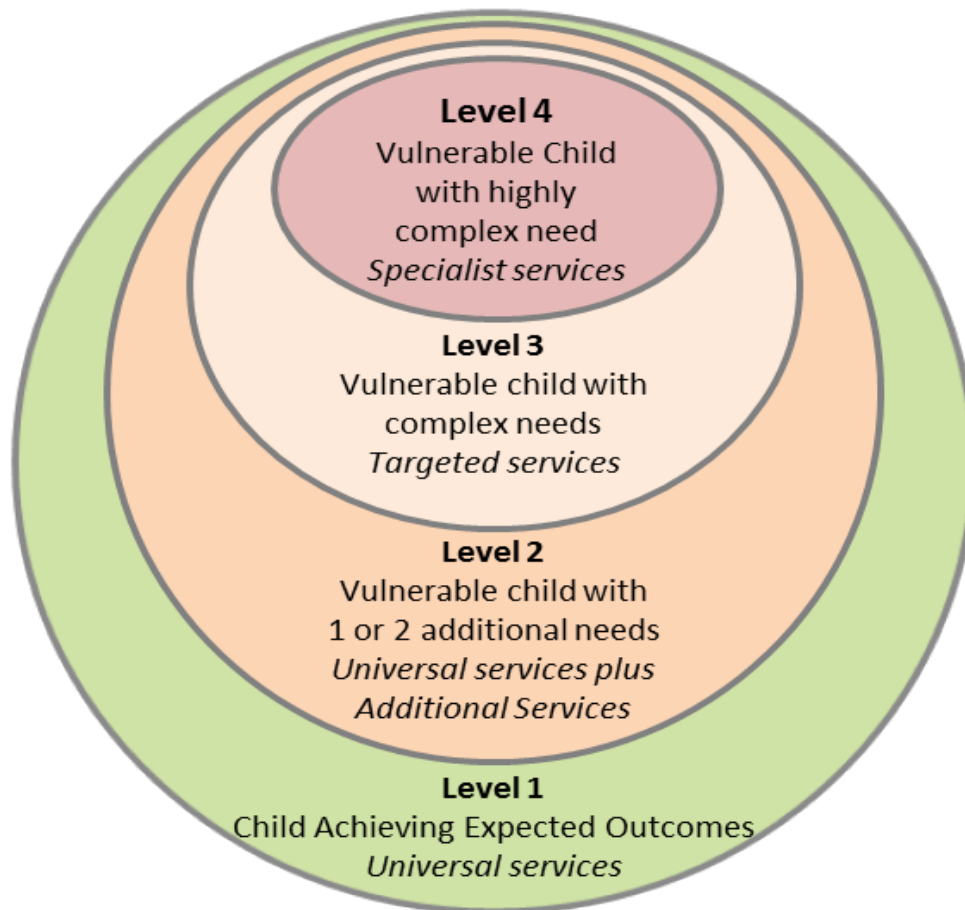
- Maximise school readiness
- Maximise School attendance
- Minimise the numbers of referrals to social care
- Maximise the numbers of assessments completed to support the family when a need emerges
- Minimise the number of parents and children involved in crime and Anti-Social Behaviour
- Minimise the number of Looked After Children
- Minimise the number Child Protection Plans

- 10.2 The following 'output' measure which constitutes a proxy indicator of an effective co-ordinated early help offer, will also be adopted:

- Increase in the number of 'open' Common Assessment Frameworks completed per agency.

11 Infrastructure

- 11.1 We already have many examples of early help good practice in Coventry. These include: Acting Early, Strengthening Families (formerly Troubled Families) and the Common Assessment Framework. Our delivery model includes a continuum of Early Help provided by a range of organisations including voluntary and community groups addressing different levels of need. We have integrated processes including Team around the Child and the Early Help Assessment and integrated teams including Children's Centre staff and Health Visitors to ensure earlier identification of emerging need and to provide a faster response.
- 11.2 The graphic below shows our graduated approach to service delivery with different types of services involved in different levels of vulnerability.



12 Our delivery will include:

- a) Embed and roll out the Acting Early (0-5 year olds) initiative so that universal/universal plus professionals complete early targeted work with children and families, professionals hold risk and draw down specialist support rather than referring on.
- b) Implement Strengthening Families programme (formerly Troubled Families) phase 2 so that we meet the government targets of impacting 3,120 families over the next five years.
- c) Integrate early years' services including Children's Centres, Health visitors and the Family Nurse Partnership, building on the evidence and best practice identified in the Early Intervention Foundation publication 'Getting it Right for Families' (2014).
- d) Develop "hubs" that integrate children's services in community settings, for ease of access for children, young people and families.
- e) Deliver the Early Learning programme so that government participation targets for 2, 3 and 4 year olds are met. This includes developing and optimising the Coventry Private Voluntary and Independent childcare sector.
- f) Focus on the 'toxic trio' of domestic violence, alcohol and drug abuse. This includes the development of the Family Drug and Alcohol Court work (targeting early intervention in repeat pregnancies and post care support after birth) and commissioning approaches.
- g) Building on the learning from 'Acting Early' develop our integrated Acting Early for school-age early help offer by developing strong partnership relationships between schools and early help services, parents and young people

- h) Strengthen our parenting offer so this builds on good practice and focus on group as well as individual work, bringing together parents and families to work effectively together.
- i) Develop a new model for mental health and emotional wellbeing support. Build capacity and expertise of universal professionals to spot signs and symptoms early, and put in place plans of early support after consultation from mental health professionals. Clear support and treatment pathways for young people who need stepping up to more specialist treatment.
- j) Deliver phase 2 of the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities reforms – “Lifting the Cloud of limitation” with a focus on person-centred approaches and an effective journey to adulthood.
- k) Deliver the Ignite Programme in partnership with Coventry Law Centre and Grapevine and funded by the Early Action Neighbourhood Fund. This programme has a specific focus on working with families at the earliest point to build capacity to manage day to day problems as well as developing personal and community networks. It is intended to change the relationship between families and services and to accelerate Coventry's investment in Early Help.
- l) Deliver effective health promotion, to empower families to have an influence over their own health through positive lifestyle choices.
- m) Develop our collective workforce in strengths-based working, working with parents as well as children, developing personal and community networks – to provide support and challenge and to work to the guiding principles.
- n) Implement consistent processes for assessment across all organisations.
- o) Use our children's services buildings more effectively by considering different ways of operating them and maintaining an appropriate balance between home-based services and building based services.

13 Governance and Accountability

- 13.1 The multi-agency Children's Early Help Board will oversee the progress of the strategy, with accountability to the Children's Joint Commissioning Board, the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Local Children's Safeguarding Board.

14 Key challenges

- 14.1 Coventry has a wealth of expertise and a strong foundation from which to build on and deliver the strategic objectives outlined above however a number of key challenges need to be addressed:

14.2 Leadership

- There is a need to build on the existing strong leadership in Coventry to create a shared focus and ambition for Early Help across all public sector and voluntary partners, supported by shared outcomes and joint work programmes which promote an ethos of cross directorate and organisational working.

14.3 Workforce development

- It is evident from the number of contacts made to Social Care Referral and Assessment that some practitioners are not sufficiently skilled or well supported to engage and support children and families who are 'just below' the level of need which requires social care intervention and do not feel confident to manage 'risk' effectively. Practitioners need to be better supported in developing the skills and confidence required.

- There does not appear to be a consistent understanding about the continuum of need across families and appropriate responses to different levels of need. This leads to conflicting expectations across services about the responses families need. There needs to be a better shared understanding in order to improve relationships between practitioners from different services and professional backgrounds. The important role of Early Help practitioners in supporting families with complex needs needs to be recognised. Likewise, the expertise of social care practitioners needs to be valued and used appropriately by other services. The interface (pathway) between early help and specialist services (step up and step down) needs to be more explicit.
- There is a not a consistent understanding of, or approach to working in a Whole Family context. In many cases there are a range of different services and practitioners supporting individual within families. This is an ineffective use of resources. It 'overloads' and confuses families and it means that no single practitioner is taking overall responsibility for co-ordinating Early Help support. There is a need to build on a Whole Family approach across all strategic partners and services including the Voluntary Sector and Faith Sector.
- Not all services and practitioners, that should be, are utilising the Common Assessment Framework to assess and plan services for children and families with additional needs.
- Services and practitioners need to better understand the importance of the CAF as an early help assessment tool. This could be achieved by more robust multiagency CAF training and an enhanced support model for practitioners undertaking the lead role. (More robust training and an enhanced support model should assist in addressing the first three bullet points under workforce development.)
- In addition to the current arrangements that quality assures CAFs and provides feedback to practitioners, all strategic partners and services should be provided with regular reports on the number of CAFs produced (proxy indicator of early help) to enable them to review and benchmark performance.

14.4 Commissioning & Investment

- Overall there is a need for greater investment to secure sufficient targeted Early Help for families with children within this age range in order to reduce the demand for high cost statutory intervention. Within the current financial climate this will inevitably mean disinvesting in some services in order to reinvest in others.
- There is a need to develop a broader (corporate) commissioning framework across partner agencies. This framework will direct the commissioning intentions for Early Help and whole family approaches and maximise effectiveness, impact and value of available funding.
- As previously noted, Coventry faces significant financial challenges. Therefore there is a need to consider how to marshal resources beyond established institutional, professional or budgetary confines such as through the use of peer supporters and volunteers. There is potential to work with and build on Coventry's strong community of volunteers and extend and develop existing peer support programmes. This will not only create additional social capital but it may also create additional and sustainable capacity to deliver the Early Help offer.