

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND EARLY HELP SERVICES

TO:	ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE		
DATE:	29 JUNE 2015	AGENDA ITEM:	10
TITLE:	CREATING A SINGLE PATHWAY TO EARLY HELP SERVICES		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	CLLR JAN GAVIN	PORTFOLIO:	CHILDREN & FAMILIES
SERVICE:	CHILDREN'S SERVICES	WARDS:	ALL
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The reshaping of the Directorate of Education, Adults and Children's services in 2013 moved statutory and non-statutory services for Children and Young People under one service area (Children's services). In 2015 the Directorate of Education, Adults and Children's services was split into two Directorates, there is now a Directorate of Children's Services, Education and Early Help, with a single Director responsible for these service areas.
- 1.2 The "front door" for statutory services is provided by the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) but there are a number of pathways to access services for Early Help.
- 1.4 A Business Case has been developed to streamline the access point and referral process for Early Help support by creating a single pathway. The aim is to improve the customer journey and ensure children and young people's needs are picked up appropriately.
- 1.5 A number of workshops with partner agencies and services at Reading Borough Council were held in February to review the proposal and this confirmed that the proposals met the requirements of our referrers.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 Endorse the development of the access point and referral process for Early Help services by creating a single pathway for this support.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1. There are a number of drivers to streamlining access point and referral process to create a single pathway for requests for Early Help support:
 - 3.1.1. The most recent Ofsted inspection in 2013 recommended the introduction of more effective pathways into and out of Early Help services to ensure the children and families are supported in the right way, at the right time and at a level of support that is appropriate to their needs.
 - 3.1.2. Pathways into Early Help services need to target resources effectively in the context of improving outcomes for Troubled Families as part of the phase 2 programme.
 - 3.1.3. Very few contacts that went to MASH but did not reach the threshold to Children's Social Care were referred to the Children's Action Team, increasing this referral rate to Early Help will help reduce re-contact rates to MASH.
 - 3.1.4. Reading's Early Help Strategy 2013-2016 sets out one of its key priorities as Early Identification and Assessment of Need - improved coordination and consistency in the way needs are identified and referred for further support. It also identifies the need for effective Early Help for Children and Families by introducing a single point of contact for all agencies to refer families for further support.
 - 3.1.5. The Reading Children's Safeguarding Board have agreed to review thresholds to ensure that the right services are offered to children and families at the right stage.
 - 3.1.6. Feedback from our partners (following workshops in February 2015) revealed frustration with the current situation. There is confusion resulting from many routes into accessing services and the electronic referral system is seen as a barrier to accessing services. Partners would prefer one point of entry and a simpler process to access services.

4. PROPOSAL

- 4.1. Create a single Pathway for Early Help Service support - therefore ensuring there is a single referral and allocation of resources process. This will be achieved by:
 - 4.1.1. Developing a single pathway and triage system to access Early Help Services.
 - 4.1.2. Agreeing which services will be included in the single pathway and who needs to be involved in the triage process. It is expected that all RBC non children social care services will be included in this pathway and it is proposed to include voluntary sector and health partners as well.
 - 4.1.3. Developing one form to request Early Help support that can be completed using the Electronic (eCAF) system or by filling out a Word document and securely emailing to us.
 - 4.1.4. Testing the new pathway using common scenarios. We will explore how triage can be used to match services to the needs of the child, young person and/or family.

- 4.1.5. Developing training and guidance on what a good assessment will look like.
- 4.1.6. Linking in with the LSCB review of thresholds and the promotion of the thresholds and how this links to service delivery.
- 4.1.7. It will be important to link to LSCB training and induction processes to enable the workforce to understand how to access Early Help support using the threshold guidance and our pathways.

5. BENEFITS

- One front door for Early Help Services with a single point of entry.
- Reduced duplication and a simpler referral process.
- Increase partnership/multi agency working and access to a wider range of services.
- The journey for the family is less chaotic and there is less confusion for families and agencies.
- There is no wrong door to access services at Reading Borough Council.
- Processes are more outcome focussed and builds on the outcomes star work.
- Identifies Troubled Families more easily.
- Partners are more confident in the process.
- Referrers do not take short cuts to access services and referrers do not automatically go to MASH where it is clear a case does not meet the threshold for Children's Social Care.
- Informs commissioning priorities.
- There is a reduction in referrals that have escalated over time due to no early response.

6. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 6.1. This work has been identified as part of the priority in Reading Borough Council's Corporate Plan 2014-17: People are supported and protected when they need to be; People are healthy and can thrive in their community.

7. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 7.1. A wide range of partners have been consulted on the proposal and are engaged in the implementation of the single pathway.
- 7.2. Ensuring that safeguarding activity is timely, proportionate and necessary means that our service users will access the right service at the right stage, based on need.
- 7.3. Early Help is included in service user engagement activities.

8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 8.1. The project has undertaken an assessment on whether an Equality Impact Assessment is relevant.

- 8.2. It concluded that an Equality Impact Assessment was not relevant since the criteria used to assess thresholds for accessing services will not change (this is based on the thresholds agreed by the LSCB), and it will be based on more information from multiple agencies and services participating in the triage process. The processes that will be put in place for this project will not change which groups are assessed or access services.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. There are no legal implications inherent in the report although the implementation of the project will enable the service to better fulfil its statutory responsibilities under the Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. There are no capital or revenue implications for implementation as existing resources will be used in the new processes.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1. None