

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S EDUCATION & EARLY HELP SERVICES

TO:	ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE		
DATE:	4 July 2016	AGENDA ITEM:	14
TITLE:	FAMILY SUPPORT AND CHILDREN CENTRE REVIEW FINDINGS		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	CLLR GAVIN	PORTFOLIO:	CHILDREN'S SERVICES
SERVICE:	Early Help	WARDS:	All
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1. This report outlines the findings from the Family Support and Children Centre's Review, that was committed to being completed in February 2016 ACE report and outlines the next steps to review the offer to families.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1. This review consulted with families and staff across the Early Help services and Children's Centres Advisory Boards. It also researched into other Family Support organisations across Reading and what support they offered as well as exploring what type of Family Support our statistical local authority neighbours undertook.
- 2.2. There was consensus amongst staff and families as to the outcomes families and their children need help with as well as the key areas of risk for children and their families which could limit their success in achieving positive outcomes.
- 2.3. The mapping exercise appeared to demonstrate that there is a wealth of other Family Support type organisations operating in Reading, however this support is mainly mother and toddler type groups or specialist groups for families with particular needs e.g. disabilities, health issues. There are far fewer organisations offering targeted 1-1 support for vulnerable families within the home or parenting programmes.
- 2.4. Research into what our statistical neighbours offered in terms of Family Support was limited in terms of difficulties in accessing this information, although there was greater information gained regarding Children Centres.

3. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 3.1. That Committee notes the findings of the Family Support and Children's centre review.
- 3.2. That Committee request a follow up report that outlines a proposal for future service delivery and offer in the Autumn of 2016 once the information and data from the Transformation process can be used with this review.

4. POLICY CONTEXT

- 4.1. Reading's Early Help Strategy (2013 - 2016), agreed by ACE committee in 2013 sets out the following strategic priorities:
- Intervening early before issues, needs and costs increase; it is vital that strategy begins to manage demand not just meet demand, as we aim to see services focused on reducing cost to the council across children's services.
 - Targeting resources effectively, including increasing assertive outreach and follow-up support to the families that need it most;
 - Meeting the needs of families with complex and multiple needs;
 - To 'Think Family', ensuring we are being creative in meeting needs rather than delivering services. Therefore ensuring an integrated approach at all levels across all Children and Adult partner agencies, including making the best use of the Voluntary and Community sector;
 - Making it easier for families to access advice, information and support, building the capacity of communities and individuals to develop services and to support each other
- 4.2. An Early Help offer will continue to provide support to families in Reading, but this needs to be a partnership led model of delivery. In particular working and challenging partners to increase the voluntary sector, schools and health sector Early Help provision whilst Reading Borough Council (RBC) moves to targeting its resources to meet vulnerable children's needs as a priority to prevent future failure.
- 4.3. There are two key areas of strategy that are fundamental to the achievement of the vision;
- Ensuring that the Troubled Families agenda is delivered as it provides a golden thread for partnership working and specific focus on targeting families and reaching particular outcomes.
 - Ensuring that there is specific focus on joint work with colleagues to strengthen the Early Help offer and looking for efficiencies where possible.
- 4.4. The Directorate of Children's, Education and Early Help Services are currently initiating a programme of transformation across five pillars of change. These include:
- Building effective partnerships which support the needs of Reading's children and families
 - Enhancing early help, early intervention and prevention
 - Reviewing and transforming Special Educational Needs and disability services
 - Enhancing the effectiveness of Children's Social Care services
 - Raising attainment
- 4.5. Consultants iMPower Consulting Ltd have been commissioned to work alongside the Directorate over the coming months, in order to provide external advice and challenge to the identification of opportunity areas for service improvement, and enabling the delivery of required budget savings and improved service outcomes.
- 4.6. As part of this work, iMPower will produce a number of deliverables that will compliment and strengthen the valuable insight gained from the initial review of Family Support and Children's Centres. Their work includes:
- Mapping of current spend on early intervention and preventative services, across the tiers of need/thresholds 'windscreen'. From this exercise, iMPower will be able to comment on the appropriateness of the resultant distribution of spend.

- Three Effectiveness reviews to understand the extent to which particular services are working with the right people at right time and understand the outcomes achieved by these services.
- Facilitating reviews of a sample of Looked After Children's cases. This work will build a greater understanding of the drivers of demand and explore how demand on Children's Social Care Services could have been avoided if early help, early intervention and preventative services had been available, offered or had been more effective. The case reviews will further build the understanding of which services have effectively managed demand on Social Care services and strengthen the understanding of the requirements for early help services in Reading.

4.7. In light of the above, it is recommended that the initial review of Family Support and Children's Centres is considered alongside the outcomes of iMPOWER's work before work is undertaken on the development of proposals for the future. This will allow the proposals to be informed by an improved level of insight and a clearer understanding of the role of Family Support and Children's Centres within the wider transformation of the Directorate of Children's, Education and Early Help Services.

5. THE FINDINGS

5.1. The Review process

5.2. The Family Support and Children Centre's review consulted with families and staff across the Early Help services and Children's Centres Advisory Boards. It also researched into other Family Support organisations across Reading and what support they offered as well as exploring what type of Family Support our statistical neighbours undertook.

5.3. Discussions with staff

5.4. Staff from across the Early Help services were invited to participate in facilitated discussions to explore key areas such as:

- What are the key outcomes that families and their children need help with
- What are the key priority areas of need or risks for children and their families which may limit their success or achieving positive outcomes
- Which are the target groups of families that RBC should support

5.5. A number of key outcomes were identified by staff where families and their children needed help with:

- Children to be healthy (both mental and physical health)
- Access into education, employment or training
- Children to be safe in the home and community
- Children to be achieving in school (including readiness for school and attendance in school)
- Positive family relationships
- Making a positive contribution to the community (including reduction in anti-social behaviour)

5.6. There was fairly common agreement amongst the staff around the main risks which, when present, would reduce the likelihood of the above outcomes being achieved. The main risks were identified as:

- Low level consistent neglect (parents not being able to meet child's basic needs)
- Parents mental health and substance misuse issues
- Child's mental health and substance misuse issues
- Conflict - either between parents and/or between parents and children

- Children exposed to risk e.g. Children Sexual Exploitation (CSE), bullying, cyber bullying
- 5.7. Staff found it less easy to identify target groups of families. Rather than target groups, there were comments around levels of intervention and ensuring:
- There was a clear criteria for intervention - use of thresholds
 - Not letting families get to crisis point before intervention - early intervention
 - Early intervention - in terms of age
 - Families who want support (pre-Common Assessment Framework) get support
 - Support for complex, multiple needs families
- 5.8. There was also a discussion re what a Family Support offer must do should do and what it could stop doing in the future. There were no suggestions around what Family Support should stop doing in the future. With regard to 'must do' there were comments around providing intensive support to families, as well as some of the statutory duties i.e. Parenting Orders, Education Supervision Order's. There were also comments around the need to offer 1-1 support as a 'must do' and parenting groups as a 'should do' as well as the idea of a family hub, similar to current Children Centre's but open to a wider age range.
- 5.9. **Feedback from Children's Centre Advisory Boards (AB)**
- 5.10. The five Children Centre's Advisory Boards were invited to participate in providing their views in response to three key questions regarding supporting children and families within Children's Centres. This took the form of small group discussions in the AB meeting by the Chairs followed by written responses collated from the boards.
- Who are the families we most want to see accessing the Children's Centres and why?
 - What are the most important services provided by our Children's Centres?
 - How are these services helping families?
- 5.11. **Who are the families we most want to see accessing the Children's Centres and why?**
- 5.12. The responses indicated the boards considered all families should continue to be able to access Children's Centre services as well as those with higher and more defined need. However, the majority of responses considered targeted/vulnerable families to be the highest priority. There were a range of groups highlighted including:
- Vulnerable families with low level needs
 - Families living in poverty
 - Children subject to a Child Protection (CP) /Children in Need (CiN) plan
 - Parental mental health, well-being, isolation
 - Families new to the area/Country
 - Parental substance misuse
 - Families who have experienced domestic violence
 - Housing issues including homelessness
- 5.13. **How are these services helping families?**
- 5.14. The Boards provided a wide range of responses that have been grouped into similar outcomes for families.
- Integrated and early support services that families can access locally which support long term gains-moving families out of poverty and closing the gap in outcomes for children.
 - Ensuring children are ready for nursery through universal services.
 - Improving outcomes for families through adult education, employment and volunteering
 - Improving parenting skills and confidence and prevent escalation of need

- Improving health and well-being for families

5.15. Review of other Family Support provision in Reading

- 5.16. In our research we identified a number of Family Support type organisations across Reading not delivered by Reading Borough Council. Some of these are part funded by RBC whilst others are not. Many of these offer universal services (open to all) who may need advice or information concerning certain topics e.g. debt or finances. Whilst others offer more specialist support. This specialist support appears to be around health issue e.g. diabetes, mental health, autism and support may be in the form of advice, information or group activities. There are many organisations who offer support for families who have children with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND). These organisations e.g. MENCAP, Dingley Specialist Early Years Centre, Berkshire Autistic Society, typically offer group activities, advice, support and/or information for these families.
- 5.17. There appears to be far fewer organisations that offer 1-1 type Family Support within the home. Examples of these are HomeStart.
- 5.18. There is also a wealth of mother and toddler groups across Reading, most of which are open to all families with U5 year olds, however many of these are delivered in faith buildings which may restrict accessibility for some families.
- 5.19. Discussion with Families
- 5.20. There were two focus groups held with families as well as two online questionnaires - one for families who had been supported by family workers and one for Children's Centre parents. There were approximately 330 responses- the vast majority being completed by Children's Centre parents. 30% of the responses came from families living in East Reading, 26% from Caversham and 28% from Tilehurst.
- 5.21. Families were asked to consider various aspects of the key outcomes for children and the risks and barriers to them achieving these outcomes. There was general agreement between each of the group's responses. Most families thought the key outcomes for children were:
- Health - physical and emotional
 - Being safe inside and outside the home
 - Positive family relationships
 - Having basic needs met i.e. food, shelter etc.
 - Have opportunities and choices and being able to make their own decisions.
- 5.22. The first three of the above were also identified by the staff group as being key outcomes for children.
- 5.23. There was general agreement as to the top five areas of risk for children of not achieving these outcomes:
- Unhealthy relationships with peers e.g. bullying
 - Parents not meeting child's basic needs
 - Not being engaged at school/risk of exclusion
 - Family breakdown e.g. conflict between parents
 - Child's mental health/substance misuse
- 5.24. There was also much consistency between the risk areas identified above by families and the staff group. The one anomaly identified by the staff group, but not the families was 'parents mental health and substance misuse issues'
- 5.25. Responses indicated the five most important areas they thought families were most likely to need support with were:

- Health - child's physical and emotional well-being
- Family routines and boundaries e.g. parenting support
- Health - parents physical and emotional well-being
- Positive family relationships
- Housing issues/Money - access to benefits

5.26. Findings re Family Support and Children Centre's support from Statistical Local Authorities

5.27. Ten similar Local Authorities were canvased as to their current Family Support review both in children's Centre's and other teams that offer Family Support. This detail is in the appendix. There is not a single approach that all are using, as you might expect, but some themes are worth considering:

- Majority of Children's Centre's have moved to a Cluster model
- One Local Authority has developed family hubs and others are exploring this.
- There is a mixture of universal and targeted work undertaken in most Centre's.
- Health provide the universal offer in one local Authority
- All Children Centre's are offering Family Support through different referral routes.
- In most local Authorities that were contacted referrals come through one front door and then allocated to appropriate services
- All Local Authorities provided parenting courses
- Common threads were Family assessments, Outcome tools, Thresholds - reactive and proactive work.

5.28. There does, however need to be recognition that like RBC many Local Authorities face significant budget pressures and it is likely they will be going through similar review exercises.

5.29. In terms of Family Support outside of Children Centres there was much commonality within the statistical neighbours we had feedback from.

- One front door/no wrong door for referrals where there was a concern about a child.
- The use of a threshold document to determine levels of support as well as Troubled Families criteria
- Step up and step down between Social Care and early intervention teams around Family Support. Although there were some differences re whether Family Support /Early Help teams worked with CiN or CP cases.
- Whole family and key worker approach to support with use of an assessment, CAF or Early Help assessments as well as some screening tools e.g. CSE, Domestic Violence, Teenage pregnancy
- A range of Parenting programmes delivered i.e. Triple P, Webster Stratton as well as some locally developed programmes
- Outcomes were measured, but in a variety of ways, Outcome Stars, Use of Troubled Families criteria, Sign of Safety scaling and pre and post programme scorings
- Structurally, the majority of Family Support services were based within a locality model within Early Help services which were located within Children's Services
- Teams often appeared to have a 'standard' and 'intensive' option, as well as some having specialist workers within their intensive teams e.g. Adult drug and alcohol worker
- Many authorities had a time limit to the amount of support offered and a case would be reviewed if extending the work for longer than a year.

5.30. Conclusions

5.31. There was much agreement amongst the staff and families as to the outcomes which many families need support with. This was also true of the risks, which if present, can reduce the likelihood of the outcomes being achieved. In this way the focus and offer which a Family Support service should contribute to is clear.

- 5.32. It is also evident whilst there are a myriad of voluntary and faith organisations offering some form of Family Support; this is mainly in the form of mother and toddler type groups or for those families with children who have SEND. It would appear there are very few organisations which offer 1-1 support within the family home around multiple issues. Again this would suggest a model of Family Support which is required if families are to achieve the above outcomes.
- 5.33. The research into our statistical neighbors did not highlight any radical differences in either the structure or model of delivery of Family Support as that offered in Reading.
- 5.34. Next Steps will therefore be:
- Complete the work with IMPOWER that will be reporting back to the Director of Children's, Education and Early Help by end of August 2016.
 - Using the review and IMPOWERs findings build a proposal that has a revised Family Support and Children's Centre offer to local children and young people and their families by end of September 2016.
 - Report to ACE in October 2016 that outlines this proposal and seek public consultation on the proposal.
 - Complete the public consultation by January 2016.

6. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 6.1. Our Family Support offer, including the work in Children's Centres supports these two corporate priorities.
1. Safeguarding and protecting those that are most vulnerable;
 2. Providing the best start in life through education, early help and healthy living;

7. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 7.1. Section 138 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 places a duty on local authorities to involve local representatives when carrying out "any of its functions" by providing information, consulting or "involving in another way".
- 7.2. The review process included two ways to listen to the views of families. A short survey was used with families that we are currently working with, where workers visited or sat with families and completed the survey using tablets. In addition to this the same survey was made available online via the Council's website mainly for our wider Children's Centre users to complete.
- 7.3. Secondly two target groups of families, currently supported by Family Workers were invited to participate in a focus group discussion, and ten families participated in these discussions.
- 7.4. A full consultation process will be planned if the proposal that will be outlined in the Autumn of 2016 requires a significant change in offer to local families and children.

8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 8.1. At this moment an equalities impact assessment is not required, but when the Family Support and Children's Centre consultation proposal is developed further this will need to be undertaken.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1. None for this report.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1. None for this report at this stage. However full financial information will be included in the proposal report back to ACE in the Autumn of 2016.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1. None used for this report.