

Name of meeting: Children's Scrutiny Panel
Date: 1st April 2019
Title of report: Early Support Partnership

Purpose of report:

To update Scrutiny on development of the Early Support Partnership, the Family Support service and to provide information on the three programmes (Family Group Conference, Multi Systemic Therapy and the Family Mental Health Service) funded through the Department for Education Innovation funding, in order to generate discussion and help Councillors decide whether to investigate and debate issues and hold the executive to account.

Key Decision - Is it likely to result in spending or saving £250k or more, or to have a significant effect on two or more electoral wards?	No The programmes are DfE funded to March 2019, but are being built into the base budget for the next financial year.
Key Decision - Is it in the Council's Forward Plan (key decisions and private reports?)	n/a
The Decision - Is it eligible for call in by Scrutiny?	n/a
Date signed off by Strategic Director & name	Jo-Anne Sanders (for Mel Meggs) 22.3.19
Is it also signed off by the Service Director?	N/A
Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Legal Governance and Commissioning?	N/A
Cabinet member portfolio	Councillor Viv Kendrick Councillor Masood Ahmed

Electoral wards affected: All

Ward councillors consulted: n/a

Public or private: Public

(Have you considered GDPR?)

Yes GDPR has been considered. The information in this report does not identify any individuals.

1. Summary/Background

The new Early Support Service was implemented from April 2018 with the Head of Service in post from July 2018. The service offers non statutory services to children, young people and their families in line with the Kirklees Early Support Strategy. The entitlement includes Family Support, Parenting and Group Work, Family Group Conferencing, Multi Systemic Therapy and the Family Mental Health Service.

Early Support for children and families is more effective and less expensive than intervening when problems become entrenched. Even if early support cannot stop problems escalating, targeted and evidence based interventions for those at most risk can still make a difference and reduce the need for the high costs of social care involvement and taking children into care. These kinds of services are better for children and families but are also important to ensure that the local safeguarding system is sustainable. Without enough early and targeted support pressures on social work can become too high, reducing the quality of decision making and practice and raising costs. Thus, in summary, effective early support is better for children, better for the local safeguarding system and better for the public purse.

The 2016 Ofsted inspection highlighted that Kirklees needed to develop edge of care services and ensure that timely support is available in a crisis.

Many of the issues raised by Ofsted and the problems identified in Kirklees have related to the effectiveness of partnership working in recent years. There is a strong commitment by partners and a key aim of the Improvement Plan is to make best use of this to improve outcomes for children and young people.

Success and change in children's services relies on strong and effective partnership working and this has been the primary focus of work around early support in Kirklees.

Partnership engagement

The primary focus of the work on early support has been around strengthening the early support partnership through a number of engagement events. These events included discussing and agreeing values and principles around early support and the shared understanding that early support is not a single council service but that it is everyone's responsibility. The engagement events discussed the importance of shared language and as part of this it was agreed that the partnership preferred the use of the work 'support' rather than 'help' as it was felt to be more positive and restorative, this was reflected in the strategy document and the approach is now to be referred to as 'Early Support'.

The Early Support Partnership was launched in January 2019 with an event that had a clear purpose to showcase the partnerships and services across the district that work together in a restorative, shared approach to deliver and respond to the early support needs of children, young people and families in Kirklees. Around 200 partner delegates including local authority services, Locala, Kirklees Safeguarding Children Board, schools, voluntary/community sector, faith organisations and health agencies came together to demonstrate their commitment to the Kirklees' vision - that all children, young people and vulnerable learners regardless of gender, race, religion or social status - should have the opportunity to reach their full potential and to achieve their ambitions.

2. Key issues/current position section

Kirklees Early Support Strategy

The Kirklees Early Support Strategy and Partnership has been launched along with the new Framework for Decision Making and a new Early Support Assessment providing a

collaborative approach to identifying and meeting the needs of families before they require intervention by colleagues in social care. The strategy and assessment was developed working with partners and has ownership across the whole partnership rather than being council led or including a small number of agencies. It outlines the approach to be taken which is relationship based and emphasises the importance of conversations and working together to achieve positive outcomes for children, young people and families in Kirklees. The strategy reinforces that early support is everyone's responsibility and therefore the best person to be 'lead professional' is often the person who has built up the relationship with the family and not always a council officer, it has been recognised that additional support is required to build this capacity across the partnership and this has been reflected in recent recruitment to roles within the family support service.

The strategy has been developed with strong links to the restorative practice approach developing a focus on "Working with...." Regular partner engagement and listening to has resulted in an increased understanding of shared responsibility and appetite to work together to deliver improved outcomes for children and young people.

The approach outlined in the strategy is based on building communities, developing resilience and establishing networks. As well as developing a place based offer around four geographical and diverse areas, it is recognised that some services work best across the authority as a whole. We are developing a unifying but not uniform offer that will reflect the needs and strengths of children, young people, families and communities.

Family Support Service

At the beginning of the Kirklees and Leeds partnership it was identified that there were issues within the existing 'Early Intervention and Targeted Support service' and a service review took place.

Regular staff engagement sessions took place to listen to their concerns and suggestions for the service going forward. The Key Worker role was reviewed and listening to feedback from staff was renamed as 'Family Support Worker' the post was also regraded to a more appropriate pay grade to reflect the level of skill required to carry out the role.

There was a strong feeling from staff that the service name should be changed to the 'Family Support Service' as they felt that this accurately reflected what they offer and makes clear to families they are working with what they offer. The change of name also distinguishes them from Early Support which is the partnership approach and not a single council service.

Stability in the service led to recruitment to additional posts to increase capacity in the service. Response to the recruitment was positive and a large number of applications was received indicating that this is a service that people are now wanting to work in which is a positive step going forward.

Stability in the service has led to a significant amount of investment being made into the workforce in order to improve practice. This has included the development of a bespoke learning and development pathway which covers every role within the service and clearly sets out the training and support that is available for both new and existing members of staff. All staff in Early Support have been given the opportunity to attend training on restorative practice which is about the building, maintaining and repairing of relationships. It is based on those in authority doing things 'with people' rather than 'to them' which is a fundamental principle within the early support strategy. The training gives staff a comprehensive

introduction to the theory and practice of restorative approaches whilst also being supported to implement a restorative approach in their own work situations.

Early Support Commissioned Services

The Council currently commission two services as part of the Early Support Offer which are delivered by Action for Children and Human Kind. A decision was made by Cabinet for the services to be managed in house and be delivered as one entity which will allow for consolidation of services and alignment to the Early Support Strategy. The services delivered under the existing contracts are subject to the implications of the Transfer Undertaking (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 (as amended) ("TUPE") and staff will transfer to the Council on 1st April 2019.

Action for Children were commissioned to deliver the Children's Centre Core offer in the Dewsbury East and Dewsbury West areas which includes universal and targeted services and Family Support.

Humankind (formerly known as DISC) were commissioned to deliver the Family Intervention Project (FIP) which was set up to provide intensive Family Support.

We recognise the importance of continuity of services for families whilst working towards consolidating these contracts to ensure that they are in line with the agreed early support model.

Development of new teams

Ofsted recommendations 17 states that Kirklees should:

'Develop edge of care services and ensure that timely support is available in a crisis'

In response to this Kirklees received Department for Education (DfE) Innovation Funding to April 2019 for improvement and innovation to invest and adapt programmes for edge of care and early support. This was to develop and deliver Family Group Conferences, Multi Systemic Therapy and a Family Mental Health Service.

Family Group Conferences (FGC's)

Family Group Conferences (FGC's) originally emerged from New Zealand and are voluntary decision making meetings to help families find their own solutions to problems.

FGC is a restorative approach and the process empowers a family and their wider family network to draw on their strengths and resources to make a safe plan for their children. FGC's ensure the family network have a chance to hear and discuss the concerns. They also give an opportunity for everyone to be listened to including the child and young person(s). It can be an opportunity to be informed of any resources that could help them improve family life. Further information about FGCs can be found on the [Family Rights Group website](#).

Kirklees has previously been offering FGCs to a low number of families in both early support services and children's social care, however with the investment of the innovation funding the team has expanded from two coordinators and one team leader to 10 coordinators and 2 team leaders, which will allow for between 240 to 320 FGCs to be coordinated in each 12 month period.

The main referral point for Kirklees families for an FGC is currently when a PLO (Public Law Order) is initiated when children are most at risk of becoming looked after, however it is recognised that the service needs to engage with families at the earliest opportunity.

There has been some key successes since the expansion of the team which have included developing the skills, expertise and confidence of the team and developing relationships with colleagues in children's social care and early support. The service has also contributed to the reduction of children being becoming looked after.

The next steps for FGC are to have a stable workforce, which will allow for the further development of the service and embedding of the entitlement at the earliest opportunity to prevent children and families rising through the social care system.

Multi Systemic Therapy (MST)

Multi Systemic Therapy (MST) is an intensive family and community based intervention for children and young people aged 11-17, where young people are at risk of out of home placement in either care or custody due to their offending or having severe behaviour problems.

The key goals of MST are to break the cycle of anti-social behaviours by keeping young people safely at home, in school, and out of trouble. Further information on MST can be found on their website <http://www.mstuk.org/>.

It was identified that Kirklees did not have any family and evidence-based preventative services seeking to cumulatively address the risks of young people entering the care and custody systems. There is a large population of young people in Kirklees and this linked with the statistics show a relatively high proportion of those young people entering the care and criminal justice systems. The current lack of evidence-based programmes seeking to specifically target these areas highlights a significant need for Kirklees to invest in preventative interventions such as MST.

Coupled with the need to reduce the numbers of looked after children as a key priority for Kirklees, there is clear alignment between the desired outcomes of MST and the local authority. A decision was made to launch MST in Kirklees, initially with the provision of one MST standard team.

MST launched in Kirklees Council in January 2019, following a year of project planning involving colleagues and services from across Kirklees; with the support of MST-UK and Leeds City Council (a Partner in Practice authority with an established multi-team MST service).

The team of a Programme Manager/Supervisor and four full time therapists have been recruited and following completion of MST orientation training went live serving cases on 6th February. A back up supervisor has also been employed and trained.

Significant number of referrals already been received, from a range of sources including social care, youth offending, schools and health; with a waiting list of around 20 cases currently. Therapists are currently building up caseloads to a capacity of 5 cases each.

One of the key successes for MST has been the establishment of a steering group which has wide representation from across stakeholders who have contributed to the development of the service.

Next steps for the MST team will be in the first year to mainly focus on the development of the staff to provide targeted outcomes for families using the MST model, developing relationships with key stakeholders and ensuring long term sustainability and funding.

Family Mental Health Service (FMH)

The Family Mental Health service coordinate appropriate early support for parents who have mental health difficulties and share information relevant to the welfare of their children, with a focus on managing risk, increasing resilience, building strength and encouraging independence and reducing long term need for services. The service works restoratively and use a whole family approach to identify and explore the impact of parental mental health upon families, lifespan and intergenerational issues.

The focus has been working across Children's Social Care and Adult Mental Health to reduce the barriers between services and enhance practice in order to improve direct work with families. The results of this have been positive but additional resources were identified to be required to expand the service to support significant improvements in front line practice.

Kirklees FMH team was established in 2011 and with the investment of the innovation funding has expanded from three workers to a team consisting of a Team Manager, a social worker and 5 consultants.

One of the key successes has been the case discussions with social workers that has influenced their practice when they are working with parents with poor mental health. This has in turn reduced fear and anxiety for the social workers and reduced stigma and discrimination and crucially led to appropriate assessment of risk.

The next steps for the FMH team are to continue to increase links with key stakeholders and have a consolidated and sustainable team.

3. Implications for the Council

3.1 Working with People

Effective Early Support services working together reduces the number of children requiring social care and becoming looked after and therefore children staying within their family.

3.2 Working with Partners

Working closely with communities and our partners enables integrated services to identify local need and ensures the right support at the right time for children and their families. In order to continue to build and strengthen the partnership with schools the Community Hubs programme is now under the leadership of Early Support.

3.3 Place Based Working

The Early Support Partnership approach is based on building communities, developing resilience and establishing networks. As well as developing a place based offer around 4 geographical and diverse areas, it is recognised that some services work best across the authority as a whole.

3.4 Improving outcomes for children

The Early Support Partnership vision is that every child and young person should have the opportunity to reach their full potential and that they are best supported to grow and achieve within their own families and communities.

3.5 Other (e.g. Legal/Financial or Human Resources)

The projects are funded through the DfE innovation funding until the end of March 2019 and it then proposed that the services will be mainstreamed; however this will require financial investment of **£1,166,283** to sustain the services.

4. Consultees and their opinions

The Kirklees Children's 10 Point Improvement plan identifies the need to rebalance the safeguarding system through redeveloping better early support and preventative services by creating an improvement and innovation fund for edge of care and early support initiatives. This also includes the Kirklees partnership to develop and agree priorities, financing and an investment plan for MST, FGC and FMH.

5. Next steps

- Continue ongoing dialogue to embed 4 distinct but consistent/tailored offers across the four areas (unified not uniform).
- Implement outcome measures and identify demands & pressures within each local area
- Embed the 'early support' approach across the partnership, promoting the concept of 'working with...'
- Work with partners to embed the new Early Support Assessment.
- Consolidate and embed an effective partnership approach to providing early support across the four localities.
- Ensuring that there is a joined up and well defined local offer for families which includes Health, Community Hubs and the council's Family Support Service
- Parents and agencies have a clear understanding of how to access support & advice as part of the local offer
- Improve links with the Social Work teams now they are based in localities
- Implement agreed recommendations from the outcome of the external commission with Peopletoo.

6. Officer recommendations and reasons

That the report be noted.

7. Cabinet portfolio holder's recommendations

n/a

8. Contact officer

Michelle Wheatcroft, Head of Early Support,
michelle.wheatcroft@kirklees.gov.uk
07813 104646 or 01484 221000

9. Background Papers and History of Decisions

The three programmes are identified in the Kirklees Children's 10 Point Improvement Plan as part of Priority 3: Early Support and Edge of Care and will also support the outcomes in the Kirklees Council's Corporate Plan 2018/20 and the Kirklees Partners and Early Support Strategy as outlined in 2.5 of this report.

10. Service Director responsible

Jo-Anne Sanders, Service Director: Learning and Early Support
jo-anne.sanders@kirklees.gov.uk
01484 221000