

Children & Young People's Scrutiny Committee

Early Help Service Redesign Proposals

Report by Executive Director of Children, Young People and Learning

Summary

This report provides detail on the proposed Early Help Service Redesign to provide an improved and targeted offer to vulnerable children and families. It provides alignment with children's social care and should deliver the savings of £1.95m.

The report sets out the current Early Help offer (section 3), the enhanced targeted service being proposed and detail on the new service model and how it has been developed (sections 4 and 5 and Appendix B). A proposed timeline for the development of the work is set out in section 7 which includes the plans to launch the public consultation in March, subject to a decision by Cabinet in February 2021.

Focus for Scrutiny

The Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider the proposals for the Early Help Redesign as set out in the report and the plans for launching a formal consultation in March 2021 which will be subject to a decision by Cabinet in February 2021.

Key areas for scrutiny include:

- a) To comment on the aims and principles of the redesign proposals as set out in the report and how these will provide an improved service to vulnerable children and families in West Sussex.
- b) To identify any factors that the Committee recommends should be addressed as part of the consultation process to ensure the impact of the proposals on residents and stakeholders are sufficiently captured.
- c) Whether there are any further areas that it wishes to highlight to the Cabinet for consideration ahead of taking a decision to launch the consultation in February 2021.
- d) To confirm what further scrutiny the Committee would wish to undertake as the proposals are developed, including any potential witnesses.

Proposal

1. Background

- 1.1 This proposal outlines a new Early Help model of delivery to improve the quality of a child's home and family life, enable them to perform better at school, provide early prevention from harm and improve their long-term outcomes. The improved targeted early help offer will also reduce the need for higher level intervention and therefore the demand on children's social care services.

- 1.2 Rising demand in Social Care and Early Help means there is a need to ensure that every part of the early help resource is maximised to improve outcomes for children. In line with national trends, West Sussex has seen a significant increase in the numbers of children that are the subject of a child protection plan and the numbers of children looked after. There is also a significant increase in the number of Early Help Plans. It is clear that demand will continue to increase, and it is vital that early help services are effective at targeting and reducing demand for social care.
- 1.3 The review of the current offer has included an evaluation of current delivery points, the group offer, analysing the footfall in centres as well as a scoping of the health and library offer across the county to understand the range and reach. It also included a review to check if there is any duplication in the offer as well as an assessment of the impact of the proposed changes on service delivery. Critical is the ability to reach children who are most in need which requires the service to provide a much more agile approach.
- 1.4 The proposed early help model also delivers the planned financial efficiencies. The proposed offer is summarised in appendix B. Not all of the current early help services will be in the scope for this service redesign proposal. The services set out below in Table 1 will not be affected by these proposals and they will be retained. They will be developed as part of the wider service redesign that is currently underway within Children Young People and Learning to provide a more seamless service provision as part of the Family Safeguarding model.

Table 1 – Services out of scope for the Early Help Redesign proposals:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Emotional Support • Domestic Abuse • Youth Homelessness • Early Years and Childcare 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PAUSE • Young Carers • Intentionally Homeless • Business Support and Performance
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2. Context – the aims of the service review

- 2.1 In 2017 early help services were known as the Integrated Prevention and Earliest Help (IPEH) service. It was created by bringing together several different services and functions including Think Family, the Youth Service and The Early Childhood Service. A review was needed to ensure a more joined-up approach with other children’s services and partners.
- 2.2 A detailed and comprehensive review has now been completed underpinned by the following principles:
- services are targeted to those in greatest need;
 - services are proportionate to the level of need;
 - to put children first and ensure that they are listened to;
 - a service that is seamless and integrated;
 - meets all statutory requirements;
 - to support partners to provide universal services.

3. Current Model

3.1 The current Early Help service comprises:

- **Six Early Help Hubs:** One in each district locality providing support to children aged between 0-19 or 25 if a young person has additional needs. Each of the six Hubs offers four core services, Family Support, Enabling Families, Termly Conversations, Youth Support.
- **Family Support** is a targeted offer to support children and families with more complex needs who require help through the coordination of a multiagency Early Help Plan.
- **Enabling Families** provides a short focus offer of up to five sessions often addressing parenting or single issues which if unaddressed could escalate to require an Early Help Plan.
- **Termly Conversations:** An offer to education partners where a scheduled meeting is conducted on a termly basis to discuss children the school have emerging worries about with the view to early identification of issues that the school can support and respond to as well as a named link worker supporting with partner held Early Help Plans.
- **Youth Support** is delivered through group work, one to one youth support and *Find It Out* drop in with a focus on education, employment and training opportunities, health and wellbeing.
- **The 43 Children's Centres** providing support to families with children aged 0-5 years dealing with child development and school readiness; parenting aspirations and parenting skills; child and family health and life chances. Included in these centres is one sensory bus.
- **Information, Advice and Guidance** is also offered as part of the early help service together and includes, **Crisis Support**, support to access **Free Entitlement** for 2-, 3-, and 4-year olds and the **Family Information Service**.

3.2 The review demonstrated that;

- The current 'centre-based' offer does not necessarily reach those children and families who are most in need of help.
- The footfall in several delivery points is very low and, in several areas, the most vulnerable children and families do not visit the centres.
- Those who visit centres are mainly those who can access other universal services.
- Each centre requires a minimum number of staff to safely operate and facilities manage, diverting resources from those most in need. Many centres are only able to be open part time basis due to staffing required.

4. Proposals for Change

4.1 Central to the proposal is the greater alignment of Early Help and Social Care as well as moving towards having co-located locality teams. This change will strengthen relationships within Children's Services improving the journey for children who require help and protection as well as creating better connections

locally to partners promoting a shared responsibility to the children within localities.

- 4.2 It is proposed to have a greater focus on intervention pre- and post-statutory support. Early Help continues to evidence improved outcomes for children who receive a targeted intervention through an Early Help Plan. This work has the highest success rates both for improving outcomes for children and families and reducing the demand into children's social care. Early Help supports circa 4,000 children a year on Early Help plans. Where children's needs are met on an Early Help Plan, less than 3% go on to have a social care intervention in the following 12 months. The West Sussex Early Help targeted intervention is also recognised nationally as a leader in achieving outcomes for the *Troubled Families* program. Achieving early adopter status in 2016 and holding the number one position in England in 2020, which demonstrates best practice and results in added income for the County Council from Central Government.
- 4.3 The new model proposes an increase in the staff delivering targeted interventions with a view to the service operating in a more agile way in communities. The review has identified those centres that are in the areas of highest deprivation and therefore highest demand and it is proposed that these centres are maintained and open full time in the new model to improve their use and therefore increase their footfall. The new model proposes to reduce the overall number of Early Help delivery points across the county with a minimum of one access centre in each district and borough. A summary of the proposed delivery points in the new model is set out in Appendix A.
- 4.4 Only a small part of the Early Help offer takes place at designated delivery points, with the majority of work conducted in family homes, schools or by virtual means. During COVID19 centres have not been used to deliver the early help offer. Family support has continued to be delivered in the community and information, advice and guidance, crisis payments and Enabling Families has been delivered virtually, with uptake at a record high.
- 4.5 Reduced building management effort will enable the service to redirect resources to the targeted interventions. Centre proposals and footfall analysis is in Appendix A. The proposed change in delivery points is as follows:

Type	Current number	Proposed number
Children and Family Centres Including 1 x sensory bus	43	11
Youth and Find It Out Youth Centres	12	0

- 4.6 The Early Help service withdrawal from some delivery points will create significant opportunities for rationalisation of the estate and potential use by other WSCC services or income generation from leasing properties to community partners or on the open market. The future use of these buildings and potential income would be determined by WSCC Estates and an Asset Plan will be developed. However, the service has already received several early expressions of interest in the assets from partners, including the offer of purchase of the sensory bus. The timeline for implementing the proposed

operating model for Early Help services is September 2021, however, the timeline to complete the rationalisation of the estate will be longer.

5. Proposed New Model

- 5.1 The proposed new service will remain based in 6 geographical locality hubs aligned to district boundaries with each district hub containing at least one Children & Family Centre. (Arun 2, Adur and Worthing 4, Chichester 1, Crawley 2, Horsham 1 and Mid Sussex 1).
- 5.2 The Early Help redesign will:
- Provide a single point of entry for all families and professionals;
 - Continue to deliver from six locality Hubs who will work more closely alongside Social Care teams;
 - Increase the targeted response to vulnerable children;
 - Increase the *Enabling Families Offer* to those families that usually can cope but may need a little extra help;
 - Improve early identification; taking action to respond to problems before they are more difficult to reverse;
 - Improve collaboration and strengthen support to schools to support children and young people with attendance, achievement, attainment and health and wellbeing;
 - Promote alignment with social care so that all children and families are accessing the right help and protection from the most appropriate part of children's services;
 - Support collaboration with Public Health and the Healthy Child Programme to promote the best start in life for all West Sussex children and young people;
 - Support local partnerships to collectively improve outcomes for children and better identify when a child needs help.
- 5.3 Early Help currently provides universal services such as *stay and play* at children centres, *open access youth groups* and *youth drop-ins*. Other providers of universal services include schools, health, libraries and the voluntary and community sector. In the proposed new model, where universal services will no longer be provided, the service would support local communities to develop and retain universal support to children though enhanced and more effective partnership arrangements.

Early Intervention

- 5.4 The County Council is still committed to ensuring intervention at the earliest opportunity to support families. The proposals ensure that the County Council continues to identify and take action to respond to problems before they become more difficult to reverse. To that effect, it is proposed that Early Help build on the success of *termly conversations* between named link workers and schools. The aim is to support partners that provide universal services to children by strengthening the service through the establishment of dedicated teams, responding more flexibly to support schools and partners as issues arise. Moving away from the *planned conversations* model, this team will actively support partners to lead Early Help Plans, enabling partners to put support in place before problems escalate. The new service will also be available to offer advice and support to identify vulnerable children and support escalation of concerns about a child to the appropriate service, specifically identifying emerging needs and safeguarding concerns.

- 5.5 It is proposed that Early Help will facilitate locality partnerships through a local partnership board, one in each district. These boards will be attended by Early Help, Social Care, Health and key stakeholders in the locality. Key stakeholders invited include service users, education, early years, elected members, voluntary and community sector. Boards will provide a network of support and information through the provision of local data and will focus on how they can collectively improve outcomes for children and young people in West Sussex.
- 5.6 *Enabling Families* provision will be increased under the new model. This service provides a short and focused intervention of between 1 to 5 sessions of family support work to individual parents. This is a parent focused offer providing help for single issue or lower level concerns, often focused on parenting for those who do not require a multiagency coordinated response. This is another key tool to help parents build in confidence and prevents problems and issues from escalating into more formal interventions. The offer can be delivered flexibly to suit parent's needs, in the community, in centres or virtually.

Children and Family Centres

- 5.7 It is proposed that the new model is delivered from a network of 11 full time Children and Family centres which will provide an opportunity for Children Social Care staff to co-locate. There will be a minimum of one centre in each district. Some universal services will continue to be delivered from these centres, such as health clinics and activities run by the voluntary and community sector, whilst maintaining some space to meet with children and families receiving support from Children's Services. The core centre offer will be the provision of Information, Advice and Guidance for parents and young people, Crisis Support; the provision of emergency essentials and support to access Free Entitlement for 2-, 3-, and 4-year olds. For families and young people not in easy access of a centre this core offer can also be offered by phone or online or identified for help or seek help via the schools and the school link worker.

Family Support

- 5.8 Family Support is the Early Help targeted intervention offer which supports children who are identified as in need of help through an Early Help Plan. These children will receive whole family coordinated support from a dedicated 1:1 support in their home and the community. Workers support families to resolve issues, build resilience and seek to prevent them requiring a social care intervention. Early Help also provides an enhanced Family Support Keyworker offer for those are experiencing multiple, complex or entrenched issues within their family. These workers work directly with children stepping across from social care to continue work with the whole family to help sustain the changes and progress made while on a child protection or child in need plan. The proposal is to increase the number of Family Support workers increasing the Early Help reach across the county and delivering more efficiencies across the directorate by preventing the need for a higher cost service. Children and families are usually identified for this support via partners, identified by school or through an early help link worker discussion or are stepped across from social care but can self-refer by centre drop in or by phone from details online.

Impact on services not part of proposal

- 5.9 The wider youth offer is being reviewed as part of the wider children services transformation and adolescent offer. There will be potential opportunities for youth providers and schools to use the delivery points that become vacant and this will be examined as part of the asset planning in the next phase of work.
- 5.10 Supervised contact requires meeting space in the community to deliver and would like full use of small number of centres. Early Help withdrawal from some centres could create an opportunity to create contact centres. This will be further worked up as part of the proposal and asset plans.

6. Other options considered (and reasons for not proposing)

- 6.1 Reduce Early Help targeted intervention: this would mean that children's needs would not be met at the right time placing further strain on higher cost interventions. Early Help would continue to employ staff in centres with low footfall and reach and prevent the service moving to a more impactful and agile service.
- 6.2 Do nothing: This would not improve the level of service to those who most need it. The current model is no longer fit for purpose as outlined in this report at section 2 above given the service improvement, alignment and development that is needed and without which costs would continue to increase.
- 6.3 Greater reduction in delivery points: this would result in the areas of highest need with the most vulnerable children not having access to statutory services. Centres in areas of highest deprivation have the highest footfall rates and are being accessed by families which need them.

7. Consultation, engagement and advice

- 7.1 This is a major service redesign and the proposal will therefore require the right level of consultation and engagement. There are specific requirements for consultation if making changes to Children Centres, including the range of consultees, the timeliness of the process, the content of the information provided and how it is evaluated. The aim is to have a consultation period of ten weeks.
- 7.2 The consultation will be based on the aims and principles of the new model as set out in this report. The consultation questions would involve consulting on three options for change;
- No universal services;
 - Limited universal services;
 - Reduction in targeted intervention.
- 7.3 The option to make no changes to the current early help offer will be considered as part of the final options appraisal and decision.
- 7.4 Prior to the formal consultation there will be an informal partner engagement session planned for January/February to provide some early feedback, challenge and suggestions to inform the offer and identify further issues that

may need to be addressed during the formal consultation. It is proposed that there will be a schools' engagement session with a specific focus on the schools offer and a broader session for wider partners from the voluntary and community sector, districts and boroughs and local councillors, identified through the Early Help Partnership Advisory Boards.

7.5 UNISON will be consulted ahead of the formal staff consultation on the potential impacts to staff, including possible redundancies. Staff briefings have taken place week commencing 7 December 2020 outlining the details of this proposal.

7.6 Councillors, external partners and service users will be consulted on the proposal in March 2021. Any wider public consultation process would be undertaken using the 'Have Your Say' function on the County Council website.

7.7 The formal staff consultation would probably take place in August 2021, lasting for a month to allow for meaningful consultation with staff and UNISON on the staff impact. Provisional key dates:

- January/February proposed informal key stakeholder discussion group to support West Sussex Compact agreement;
- 23 February 2021 Cabinet;
- March 2021 start Formal Consultation (10 weeks);
- 30 June 2021 Scrutiny Committee;
- 20 July 2021 Cabinet;
- August 2021 Staff Consultation;
- October 2021 Implement new model.

8. Finance

8.1 Revenue consequences

	Current Year 2020/21 £m	Year 2 2021/22 £m	Year 3 2022/23 £m	Year 4 2023/24 £m
Revenue budget	9.877	8.877	8.327	7.927
Change from Proposal	-1.000	-0.550	-0.400	0
Remaining budget	8.877	8.327	7.927	7.927

8.2 The effect of the proposal:

(a) **How the cost represents good value**

The proposal will enable the Early Help service to re-focus their offer towards the families and children who are the most vulnerable and provide them with the support they need to divert them from more costly social care interventions. Working closely with schools and other partners and reducing the number of physical access points means that the County Council can reduce the cost of delivery whilst implementing an enhanced targeted offer, an enhanced and more proactive schools offer that aims to be more preventative.

(b) Future savings/efficiencies being delivered

The initial savings proposal was for £1.95m in total to be delivered over a two-year period, with £1.0m planned for delivery in 2020/21 and the remaining £0.95m to be delivered in 2021/22. Due to a number of vacant posts having been or planned to be deleted, the £1.0m has been delivered in 2020/21. However, given the proposed implementation date of October 2021 for the new arrangements, the planned saving of £0.95m in 2021/22 will now be revised to £0.55m anticipated in 2021/22 and the remaining £0.4m being delivered in 2022/23. These remaining savings will be achieved by the removal of a layer of management in early help, a reduction of posts relating to the delivery points and the group work offer.

(c) Human Resources

The proposal requires a revision of the current staffing structure. The number of FTE will be increased to deliver the new Early Help Offer, and there will be a reduction in or removal of other posts that will no longer be required at the same level or at all, for example some non-targeted duties or youth group work. The proposed changes also present the opportunity to review the management tiers and bring greater clarity on accountabilities.

Overall, there will be a reduction in the size of the current workforce. 25 fte have already been deleted through vacant post and the current modelling indicates a further reduction in the order of 40 to 50 fte posts which brings a potential risk of staff redundancies. However, with a continued focus on vacancy management, and active support for redeployment across the local authority, the actual number of staffing redundancies will be kept to a minimum.

(d) Asset Impact

Capital Clawback - When a local authority puts forward proposals on change of use of capital projects which were funded through the Sure Start and Early Years Capital Grant, they must inform the Department of Education and, subject to prior approval, there will be no clawback of the grant where it will be used for a similar purpose consistent with the aim of the grant.

The Children and Family Centre Delivery points are subject to different clawback arrangements and relate to buildings and equipment. However, experience to date and in line with the proposal to rationalise the estate and use any capital receipts from the unretained buildings to support similar services, it is understood that capital clawback may not apply. This is subject to further legal advice and consultation with the DfE.

To build up the Asset Plan, the Estates team will work on an options appraisal for each asset that is surplus to the requirements of the Early Help service. Options will include disposal, hand back of leased properties, re-purposing for other County Council services or leasing to third parties for revenue. Further decisions will be taken to declare assets surplus to operational requirements.

A programme of estate rationalisation of this size, will be a considerable piece of work requiring the appropriate commitment of resources which may need to be bought in. Whilst a programme of rationalisation or re-purposing of assets is

progressed, the Council will continue to incur holding costs and maintenance costs.

9. Risk implications and mitigations

Risk	Mitigating Action (in place or planned)
Potential for staff redundancy	Early Help has operated a strict vacancy management process enabling several posts to be deleted. This will continue. The need to reassign staff during COVID presents opportunities to develop broader skills and experience. Active management of redeployment across the local authority will help mitigate the actual number of redundancies.
A reduction in Early Help delivery points and universal services could raise concern about service delivery to those in need.	A clear consultation and communication plan for service users, public and partners will be implemented. Universal services from other agencies will not be affected.
Access to health clinics and financial risk to the Healthy Child Programme if centre access limited.	Public Health will work with the lease providers and WSCC Estates to renegotiate service level agreements.
Clawback of SureStart grant by Department for Education	If WSCC can demonstrate alternative use for any proceeds from rationalisation that benefits, children, and aligns with grant aims the clawback may be waived.

10. Policy alignment and compliance

10.1 Legal Implications

Legal advice will continue to be used to address the potential capital clawback and compliance with statutory duties.

10.2 Equality duty and human rights assessment

A full equality impact assessment will be conducted.

10.3 Public Health

Early Help has a collaborative working agreement with public health. The areas of specific focus are:

- Improved mother and baby health, especially the most disadvantaged;
- Good mental health for all children;
- Home environment – healthy and nurturing parents;
- Healthy weight.

These elements will be fully embedded in the proposed enhanced early health offer.

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Appendices

Appendix A - Delivery Point Summary and Maps

Appendix B - Early Help Offer on a Page

Background Papers:

None