

15 March 2012		ITEM 6
Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee		
EARLY OFFER OF HELP STRATEGY		
Report of: Carmel Littleton, Head of Learning and Universal Outcomes		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Yes	
Accountable Head of Service: Carmel Littleton, Head of Learning and Universal Outcomes		
Accountable Director: Jo Olsson, Director of People Services		
This report is: public		
Purpose of Report: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To update members on the progress towards the development of an Early Offer of Help Strategy. • To present the draft strategy to members • To update members on the timescale for implementation of the strategy. 		

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 National policy and economic drivers require Thurrock to refocus resources to target the most vulnerable families and clarify the thresholds for access to services whilst exploring innovative ways of integrated working.
- 1.2 The development of the Early Offer of Help Strategy aims to support, challenge and change parenting for the children and young people most at risk.
- 1.3 The draft strategy is presented to members for consideration and to inform the development of the final version.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That members note the progress made on the development of the strategy and discuss any feedback on the draft strategy.

3. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 3.1 This paper follows the earlier papers to the committee, the most recent being the report to the December 2011 meeting. Members are reminded that the development of the strategy builds on recent government sponsored reviews that highlight the benefits of developing an early offer of support for children, young people and families.
- 3.2 In developing the strategy we aim to:
- develop a sustainable system change, structures and approaches which will provide a more efficient and effective model of delivery of support, services and activities for Thurrock's most vulnerable children and families
 - To enable cross departmental and interagency partnership work with schools, health, police, businesses and third sector organisations to ensure that the families most at risk have access to an early offer of help
 - To break the intergenerational cycle of disadvantage by addressing the causes rather than the symptoms of the problems reducing demand on specialist services

4. ISSUES AND/OR OPTIONS

- 4.1 The strategy to develop Thurrock's early offer of help is designed to support, challenge and change parenting for:
- Parents who are struggling, whose children are suffering harm as a result, who know they need to do some things differently and who will accept the support and challenge they need to change
 - Parents who don't appreciate the harmful impact their lifestyle and/or parenting is having on their children and need challenge as well as support if they are to make the changes they need to make and thereby prevent chronic damage and/or significant harm to their children. Parenting is about skills that can be learned and applied but more importantly it is about relationship which must be reflected upon if sustainable change is to be secured.
- 4.2 We estimate that approximately 15% of the child population in Thurrock may need the early offer of help, with a further 5% needing specialist services. This will equate to approximately 3000 families.
- 4.3 We have identified that whilst there will be a need for support wherever a family lives, the greatest concentration of need is in the following areas:
- Belhus
Ockendon
Chadwell St Mary
Tilbury Riverside and Thurrock Park
Tilbury St Chads
West Thurrock and South Stifford
Parts of Grays

- 4.4 In developing our locality based offer of services we will focus on these areas with the capacity to provide outreach in other areas of the Borough where this is required.
- 4.5 The key priorities for the early offer of help are as follows:
- Strengthening entry into services through the development of a Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub
 - Developing an integrated multi agency response that targets resources to supporting parents and reducing the number of cases escalating to statutory intervention.
 - Enhancing locality delivery by decentralising and aligning specialist services to targeted locality delivery.
 - Developing a core offer of services delivered locally to support, challenge and change parenting where needed
 - Implementing a clear workforce development programme to support the delivery of the early offer of help.
 - Implementing a performance management framework that monitors and evaluates the success of the support offered
- 4.6 Consultation with key stakeholders in December highlighted the need to improve the engagement and ensure that they strategy is co designed across a variety of agencies and services. To respond to this the strategy will be taken to Cabinet in June 2012 with full implementation from April 2013.
- 4.7 Between June 2012 and April 2013, subject to agreement, staffing changes and procurement activity will be implemented.
- 4.8 Not everything we do in Thurrock is part of the early offer of help; for example our work to ensure young people are in work or education/or training is not focussed on parenting and therefore is not included, but it will continue.

5. CONSULTATION

- 5.1 Engagement with key partners is an ongoing part of the development of the strategy, this commenced with the needs analysis and has continued through two stakeholder events in December 2011 and February 2012 these events will help to shape the final recommendations to Cabinet in June 2012.

6. IMPACT ON CORPORATE POLICIES, PRIORITIES, PERFORMANCE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

- 6.1 This early offer of help priorities will assist in the delivery of the following Council priorities:
- to provide and commission high quality and accessible services that meet, wherever possible, individual needs

7. IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: Funké Nana
Telephone: 01375 652 451
Email: fnana@thurrock.gov.uk

These developments are crucial to the refocusing of existing resources to better meet identified need and to reduce duplication and achieve improved value for money. There is no new funding for this work and the resources will come from existing budget sources, these will be detailed in the report to Cabinet and full financial implications will be identified and costed.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: Lindsey Marks
Telephone: 01375 652054
Email: lmarks@thurrock.gov.uk

There are no legal implications at this stage as the strategy is under development, however, once the strategy is completed full legal implications will be considered.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: Samson DeAlyn
Telephone: 01375 652472
Email: sdeayln@thurrock.gov.uk

An Equality Impact Assessment has commenced and advice provided by the Diversity Team is guiding the development of this. The full impact assessment will be considered in the development of the strategy.

8. CONCLUSION

8.1 National policy and economic drivers require Thurrock to refocus resources to target the most vulnerable families, clarifying the thresholds for access whilst exploring innovative ways of integrated working.

8.2 The development of the Early Offer of Help Strategy will underpin changes to refocus resources to target the most vulnerable families and ensure that these changes are delivered within the required timescales whilst engaging a range of stakeholders.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS USED IN PREPARING THIS REPORT:

9.1 None

10. APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT:

Appendix A - Draft Early Offer of Help Strategy

11. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS:

Name: Carmel Littleton, Head of Learning and Universal Outcomes

Telephone: 01375 6522283

E-mail: clittleton@thurrock.gov.uk