

30 October 2013		ITEM 7
Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee		
EARLY OFFER OF HELP STRATEGY UPDATE		
Report of: Sue Green – Strategic Leader Early Years, Families and Communities		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: No	
Accountable Director: Carmel Littleton – Director of Children's Services		
This report is: public		
Purpose of Report: To update members on the implementation of the Early Offer of Help Strategy including the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub.		

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 That progress is noted.

2. INTRODUCTION / BACKGROUND

2.1 The Early Offer of Help Strategy and accompanying service design aims to provide support, challenge and change in parenting when needed, at appropriate levels depending on the identified needs. Clear links through from universal to targeted and if needed statutory intervention will focus on two key areas:

- The provision of a single point of entry to multi agency services where there is concern of a risk of harm or where a multi agency response is needed.
- Improved support for universal services to enable them to continue to support families.

2.2 The framework 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.

2.3 This report seeks to update Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the progress to date and provide an outline of the next phase of delivery through to full implementation in April 2014.

3. ISSUES AND/OR OPTIONS

3.1 Local Strategy

3.1.1 A combination of the partnership commissioned offer and service delivery by social care, education and health colleagues will ensure that the locality offer targeted to those most in need of support will include:

- Parenting support and challenge
- Family Nurse Partnerships
- Maternal and Sustained Child Health Visiting Support Programme
- Targeted Parenting Programmes
- Support for victims of domestic violence and sexual abuse
- Intervention programme for perpetrators of domestic violence
- Support for parents who misuse substances
- Family Intervention Project (linked to Troubled Families Team)
- Full Children's Centre Offer across nine Children's Centres
- Targeted parent outreach support for parents with children aged 0-5 years.
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)
- Support for lead professionals from Senior Social Work Practitioners
- Education Welfare Service
- Youth provision
- Access to entry to adult learning support
- Information, guidance and sign posting to other services.

3.1.2 The implementation of the strategy involves significant change and officers have approached this in two phases to ensure service delivery is maintained throughout the implementation.

3.1.3 Phase one has included the following:

- Commissioning of services to be delivered as a part of the offer
- Working to develop a multi agency approach to locality service delivery design
- Moving existing services to a more targeted approach
- Implementation of the Troubled Families initiative
- Ensuring that the model of delivery can be supported in the current budgetary climate and securing funding from partners to support service provision.
- Provision of training for lead professionals

3.1.4 The majority of services have already moved to a more targeted approach in line with the Early Offer of Help and national policy drivers such as the changes in children's centres and a focus on targeted work as a part of the inspection arrangements. Approximately 50% of the locality based Parent Outreach Workers cases are now families that are Child Protection or Child in Need cases. In addition targeted programmes to reduce the number of young people not in education, employment or training and youth activities are offered locally with referrals from universal services.

3.2 Phase Two

3.2.1 This current phase will take the Early Offer of Help Strategy through to implementation with a focus on the following key elements:

- Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub development
- Multi Agency Locality Team development
- ICT implementation

3.2.2 Implementation will take place between July 2013 and April 2014 with a 'go live date' for all new systems and processes of 1st April 2014.

A copy of the outline service design is included in Appendix One.

3.3 Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub

3.3.1 At the heart of the delivery of the Strategy is the implementation of a local Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), this will provide a single point of entry to services where there are safeguarding concerns or where a multi agency response is needed, supporting information sharing quickly and efficiently.

3.3.2 MASH helps deliver three key functions for the partnership;

- **Information based risk assessment and decision making**
Identify through the best information available to the safeguarding partnership those children and young people who require support or a necessary and proportionate intervention.
- **Victim identification and harm reduction**
Identify victims and future victims who are likely to experience harm and ensure partners work together to deliver harm reduction strategies and interventions.
- **Co ordination of all safeguarding partners**
Ensure that the needs of all vulnerable people are identified and signposted to the relevant partner/s for the delivery and co ordination of harm reduction strategies and interventions

3.3.3 The development of the Thurrock MASH has commenced with a specialist review of partnership contact, referral and assessment processes with the aim of:

- The completion of a thorough pan partnership review of processes and activity in relation to child referral and assessment pathways through the lens of the MASH style of working and its desired outcomes.
- The identification of any challenges to delivery of the model within the context of the Local Authority and its safeguarding partners and key opportunities for the partnership.

3.3.4 The MASH is now being designed using this feedback and was presented to partners at a well attended event of the Children's Partnership in October.

3.3.5 In developing the Thurrock MASH it has been crucial to ensure that we are able to work alongside key partners to secure their input and support for the project. This has included close working with Essex Police who are developing their Joint Domestic Abuse Triage Systems to further enhance the existing strong links between partner agencies with the aim of developing a coordinated response to inform safeguarding decisions.

3.3.6 Recently Essex Police have worked closely with the Local Authority to co locate personnel within Thurrock Council with the following aims:

- Improve level of service provided to victims of domestic abuse by Essex Police
- Reduction in the duplication when assessing Section 47 and Section 17 cases
- An improved focus on each agency's core activities with Essex Police better able to focus on the immediate and short term response stage with other agency involvement in the COU to aid that response in line with Section 10 and 11 of the Children's Act 2004
- Improved accuracy of data through access to multi agency information

3.3.6 This is in line with the development of the Thurrock MASH and will become a part of the Thurrock MASH as it develops.

3.4 Multi Agency Locality Team Development

3.4.1 Partners have agreed to develop a multi agency management structure for the Locality Teams with a move to three localities with a manager from Social Care, Health and Education to integrate planning and delivery from a strategic to front line level. These staffing changes will be implemented during phase two of the project.

3.4.2 The key purpose of these teams will be to identify needs earlier, particularly for vulnerable groups and coordinate support where needs can no longer be fully met by the universal service. Support is always provided to build on what is already in place rather than replace it and with the aim of reducing any additional support once needs have been met.

3.4.3 For some families where there are multiple, complex and often entrenched needs a more intensive approach is needed, the Troubled Families Programme provides this approach and is underpinned by the range of services available in localities and through the commissioned offer.

- 3.4.4 Services will be integrated through the team around the family approach which will include universal services and locality services such as Education Welfare Officer Support, Family Nurse Partnership support and access to targeted parenting programmes. This integration is crucial to ensure that a consistent offer of support is made and to ensure that there is reduced duplication, it also supports the 'step down' approach as families move to needing less support.
- 3.4.5 The development of one referral mechanism and the use of the Common Assessment Framework as an assessment tool to identify all additional support, along with an integrated offer that ranges from universal to targeted support through partnership working and the nomination of one lead professional brings consistency for families and for other professionals.
- 3.4.6 This change will:
- strengthen professional supervision and specialist support for staff
 - strengthen the management structure and focus resources on front line delivery.
 - reduce duplication
 - provide the opportunity to develop stronger local governance models and improve engagement in communities

3.5 ICT Implementation

- 3.5.1 The development of the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub and Multi Agency Locality Teams will need to be supported through the implementation of Information Sharing Protocols across the partnership. These will support links between universal services, the locality teams and the MASH enabling them to share information should cases escalate.

3.6 National Research

- 3.6.1 The Home Office recently published a report outlining some of the key findings from existing multi agency models to support information sharing between professionals. Whilst there were a range of models in place all were based upon three common principles:
- information sharing
 - joint decision making
 - coordinated intervention

A copy of the report is included in Appendix Two.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 Engagement with key partners is an ongoing part of the development of the strategy; a pan partnership review was completed in July 2013 and is informing the final design. In addition, through the Children and Young People Partnership a stakeholder workshop was held in October 2013.

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

This early offer of help priorities will assist in the delivery of the following Council priorities:

- Create a great place for learning and opportunity.
- Build pride, responsibility and respect to create safer communities.
- Improve health and well-being.

6. IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Financial

6.1.1 Implications verified by: **Steve Abrahall**
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6.1.2 These developments are crucial to the refocusing of existing resources to better meet identified need; reduce duplication and achieve improved value for money.

There is no new funding for this work and the resources will come from existing budget resources as part of the transformation of services to support families.

By providing an early offer of support which will reduce duplication in the number of cases that escalate to require specialist intervention and therefore provide a cost saving over time.

6.2 Legal

6.2.1 Implications verified by: **Lindsey Marks**
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6.2.2 Section 10 of the Children Act 2004 requires each local authority to promote cooperation between the authority and each of the authority's relevant partners. The arrangements are to be made with a view to improve the wellbeing of all children in the authority area, which includes protection from harm and neglect. Section 11 of the Act also obliges relevant agencies to ensure that its functions are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. This strategy directly supports this requirement through partnership delivery.

6.3 Diversity and Equality

6.3.1 Implications verified by: **Samson DeAlyn**
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6.3.2 The work detailed in this report is designed to target resources to the most vulnerable families to reduce the risk of harm and reduce inequalities. Through the developing links with universal services we are developing a continuum of support that ensures appropriate support is provided.

7. CONCLUSION

7.1 Partnership working has secured an increased resource for services and will support integrated multi agency delivery from strategic level through to front line delivery. This approach enables us to develop a comprehensive locality offer of services to support those families most in need of support whilst enabling a 'supported step up or step down' process to statutory intervention if needs increase or universal services when needs are met.

7.2 The second phase of the project has now commenced and full implementation will be completed by 1st April 2014.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS USED IN PREPARING THIS REPORT:

8.1 None

9. APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT:

- Appendix One – Thurrock Early Offer of Help Service Design
- Appendix Two – Home Office Report – Multi Agency Working and information Sharing Project Early Findings