

6 March 2019		ITEM: 5
Corporate Parenting Committee		
Families Supported by Early Help		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: N/A	
Report of: Clare Moore, Strategic Lead of Youth Offending Service and Prevention		
Accountable Assistant Director: Sheila Murphy, Assistant Director of Children and Families		
Accountable Director: Rory Patterson, Corporate Director of Children's Services		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

Early Help services are considered by Ofsted as part of their inspection framework, both of local authorities and also as part of school inspections. The new Inspection Local Authority Children's Service (ILACS) looks at early help in terms of the impact it has on prevention of children suffering harm from abuse and neglect and whether children have been appropriately helped early enough to avoid current or future harm.

The revised "Working Together to Safeguard Children" guidance makes reference to early help and states "providing early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later". It makes clear the expectations that Local Authorities should work with organisations and agencies to develop joined up early help services based on a clear understanding of local needs". It also states that local areas should "have a comprehensive range of effective, evidence-based services in place to address assessed needs early."

There is sufficient evidence through the following reports commissioned nationally: Graham Allen, Eileen Munro, Frank Field and Claire Tickell to support a commitment to, and investment in, early help. Graham Allen in his report on early Intervention states that "early intervention is an approach which offers a real opportunity to make lasting improvements in the lives of our children, to forestall many persistent social problems and end their transmission from one generation to the next, and to make long term savings to public spending."

Eileen Munro describes the importance of early help as the "importance of providing help at the earliest possible opportunity in order to improve outcomes for children, young people and families. Preventative services will do more to reduce abuse and neglect than reactive services."

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 That the Corporate Parenting Committee note the report.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 iMPower were commissioned in 2017, to support Thurrock in developing the 'Making Prevention Work' opportunity identified in April 2016. The subsequent report recommended that all preventative activity in Thurrock should be delivered under 'one offer' with a common set of outcomes, now known as 'Brighter Futures'

iMPower proposed a new delivery model for early intervention and prevention that would:

- Support children and families to identify their needs at the earliest opportunity, moving early intervention away from statutory service
- Enable a fully integrated workforce and approach to early intervention and prevention, including links to the 0-19 offer
- Build effective relationships across the system
- Support wider workforce to be confident and skilled in assessing and managing risk and delivering effective interventions
- Be designed around managing and avoiding the escalation of demand drivers

2.2 The Annual Public Health Report (APHR): [*"A sustainable Children's social care system for the future"*](#), undertook a detailed analysis of demand for children's social care and made strategic recommendations to enable the service to better manage this demand create a system that gives every child the best possible start in life.

The APHR high level recommendations include:

- Making a long term strategic commitment to invest in prevention
- Investing in the most effective prevention services
- Improved information on activity and spending.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 Following the presentation of the iMPower report and subsequent Annual Public Health report a multi-agency strategic partnership group was established and is called the Brighter Futures Board. The Board is chaired by the Corporate Director of Children's Services and has representation from key strategic partners involved in children's services. The Board oversees the delivery of the early help strategy entitled "*Brighter Futures - Twenty-first century wellbeing services for children and young people*". A series of multi-agency workshops took place under the Brighter Futures (BF) banner to raise the profile of early intervention and prevention in Thurrock and to promote

some of the messages in the iMPower and APHR and principles of the Brighter Futures Strategy.

3.2 A key part of the delivery plan requires Thurrock Council to work with all partners to deliver an integrated early help service that can incorporate and mainstream the Troubled Families (TF) programme, prior to the ending of the TF grant funding in 2020. This will involve taking a strategic approach to overseeing the implementation of the BF strategy ensuring that the early help 'offer', as defined by iMPower is successfully implemented and the recommendations within the APHR delivered. The Brighter Futures strategy is intended to describe an integrated offer to support children, young people and their families under a single identity.

3.3 The draft Brighter Futures strategy gives an overview of the principles and practices guiding early help with vulnerable children and young people, and states that it wants:

"...all children and young people in Thurrock to live in resilient families, to be happy, safe and healthy and to grow up with skills, knowledge and attributes to be confident and independent; ready for adult life....".

3.4 As partners we want to work together to provide a seamless service to children and their families, preventing the escalation of need and ensuring targeted, timely interventions that are supported by effective multi agency practices."

In addition the strategy aims to provide:

- The right support at the right time for children and their families – by building resilience for families and the communities in which they live
- A trusted lead family worker(Lead Professional) that families can rely on
- A co-ordinated response to the family's concerns and needs tackled together, not separately so that children and families only have to tell their story once".

3.5 These aims, if achieved, should provide the appropriate context and environment for a successful early help offer in Thurrock. It can provide a blueprint for reducing future demand on statutory services.

3.6 The Prevention and Support Service (PASS), works alongside other agencies i.e. Youth Offending, Children's Centres, 0-19 Healthy Families Programme and Social Care teams with the priority aim of reducing the demand on statutory Social Work and provide support to families with emerging needs in a timely way through a Team Around the Family approach, with a whole family plan.

3.7 Following a recent restructure, the PASS team consists of 13, Full time equivalent case holding, staff members from different skills and knowledge

bases that include Social Workers, Youth Workers, Education and Family Support Workers. All staff are permanent and there are no vacancies. PASS are currently working with 586 children and young people from 273 families with a variety of needs. The average caseload is 21 families per worker.

3.8 The team continue to work with an increasing number of referrals from the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and Step Down Child in Need cases from the Child and Family Assessment Team and the Family Support Teams. PASS have exceeded on the target of attached families for the Troubled Families Programme and Payments by Results claims have improved substantially.

3.9 A challenge for Thurrock, similar to many other authorities, is the need to ensure children receive the right service at the right time. In response to this aim, Thurrock is developing an edge of care service and identifying opportunities for children to be reunified from our care safely with their families. As part of the range of early help services a newly developed Edge of Care service will start working with families' from mid-February 2019. The remit of the team is as follows:

- Children and young people who are likely to enter care imminently (within a matter of days or weeks) without significant support. This could be where needs are escalating including, increased behavioural concerns being displayed by the child, family relationships or other problems are worsening and current levels of support are insufficient.
- Children and young people who the appropriate social care manager has agreed should otherwise be accommodated but an alternative intervention or support package is put in place to safeguard them as a direct alternative to a long-term placement. This would include those provided with respite care or those who have been accommodated in an emergency but where the aim is for them to be reunited with their family quickly, safely and with support.
- Children and young people who cease to be looked after and return to their parents or wider family network and where further support is needed to prevent re-entry to care and to ensure they are safeguarded.

3.10 Thurrock Council is committed to building capacity in early help services by embedding more integrated working arrangements amongst its partners and within the children's services teams. The introduction of the Signs of Safety (SoS) approach in children's services is designed to support this change so that children and families get the right help at the right time as need escalates or de-escalates. Children's services are embedding the Signs of Safety approach to build the consistency of good practice particularly in the quality of assessment and plans in social care. A key strength of the existing early help service is that it already works with families and children using an 'assets' and strengths-based model of intervention.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

4.1 For Members to note the content of this report.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

N/A

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

6.1 The contents of this report are in context with the Councils priorities.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Michelle Hall**
Management Accountant

There are no financial implications at this stage; however any costs associated with this report need to be met from existing resources.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Lindsey Marks**
Deputy Head of Legal Community

Early Help means acting to support a child, young person or their family early in the life of a problem, as soon as it emerges. It can be required at any stage in a child's life from pre-birth to adulthood, and applies to any problem or need that the family cannot deal with or meet on their own. It also applies to all children and young people, with any form of need.

Early Help requires that agencies should work together as soon as a problem emerges or a need is identified to ensure the child gets the right response, and the right services, from the right people at the right time. The aim of Early Help is to meet needs early and avoid a problem escalating or the need increasing in order to prevent or reduce the need for specialist interventions unless they are absolutely the correct response to meet the need and resolve the problem.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Natalie Warren**
Strategic Lead – Community Development

There are no diversity and equality implications within the report.

7.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

N/A

8. **Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

N/A

9. **Appendices to the report**

N/A

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