

Item No.	Classification: Open	Date: 15 October 2014	Meeting Name: Education, Children's Services and Leisure Scrutiny Sub-Committee
Report title:		Early Help	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Director of Education, Children's and Adults' Services	

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the Education, Children's Services and Leisure Scrutiny Sub-Committee notes the information within this report.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. A report was requested on early help focusing on what the council is doing to protect children where there is abuse and neglect through investing in early support for children, young people and families to keep young people safe at home and in our community.

National context

3. Research clearly demonstrates two key points related to early intervention and neglect. The first is that both families and practitioners want early intervention to prevent neglect (*'We should have been helped from day one': A unique perspective from children, families and practitioners*, LARC5). The second is that "early and effective interventions can stop child neglect in its tracks and successfully improve outcomes for children and their families" (*Evaluation of the Action for Children UK Neglect Project*, University of Salford). It has long been recognised that child neglect can have serious short-term and long-term effects for children. Early childhood neglect will have an impact on a child's future life chances and damage their educational, physical and mental health outcomes. It is imperative therefore that agencies work effectively together to support parents to give their children the best start, while at the same time intervening quickly when the signs of neglect are identified in children and young people.
4. *The Munro Review of Child Protection* (May 2011) outlines key messages around early help, emphasising that "preventative services will do more to reduce abuse and neglect than reactive services". Within these, there need to be "good mechanisms for helping people identify those children and young people who are suffering or likely to suffer harm from abuse or neglect and who need referral to children's social care".
5. *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (March 2013) provides statutory guidance on inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. It is clear in its definition of early help which means "providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life, from the foundation years through to the teenage years." It also advises that "professionals working in universal services have a responsibility to identify the symptoms and triggers of abuse and neglect, to share that information and work together to provide children and young people with the help they need."

6. Ofsted will seek evidence that thresholds between early help and statutory child protection work are appropriate, understood and operate effectively. They will also assess the impact of the local offer for early intervention on reducing risk, including reducing the need for statutory intervention.
7. The Troubled Families initiative is a national payment by results scheme focusing on “turning round” families who meet national agreed criteria. The criteria will be expanded from 2015 and will include children under 5 for the first time. This programme requires the commitment of coordinated early help in order to achieve its outcomes.

Local context

8. The Southwark Children and Young People’s Plan commits partners to helping every local child, young person and family to thrive, in particular through providing them with the right support at the right time, from early years to adolescence, and ensuring that our most vulnerable children and families receive timely, purposeful support that brings safe, lasting and positive change. The plan recognises that giving children, young people and families the best start in life is crucial to improving their outcomes in childhood and later life. It also identifies the lasting negative impact of neglectful parenting and sets out a need to gear the whole system, from universal and early help provision through to statutory services, towards spotting and acting on the signs of neglect.
9. The Southwark Safeguarding Children Board has a statutory responsibility to assess “the effectiveness of the help being provided to children and families including early help”. Early help and neglect are key components of the SSCB work programme for 2014/15. The Board has a vital role to play in helping galvanise local agencies so that they can work effectively together to identify neglect and support parents in the development of more effective parenting.
10. Southwark has made significant progress in developing early help and currently has a range of excellent council services working directly with families around early help. There are four multi-disciplinary locality-based Early Help teams and a Specialist Family Focus team operating at the SSCB thresholds of Universal Plus (level 2a), Targeted (level 2b) and Children in Need (level 3) to prevent children and young people from escalating into a higher tier of need. These teams are closely linked with the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and have a close working relationship with social work teams to ensure that cases are appropriately referred when their needs escalate.
11. Local partners are committed to ensuring that a system-wide approach to neglect encompasses aligning practice, interventions, pathways and resources around tackling the causes rather than the symptoms of neglect. At the heart of this will be further strengthening early intervention provision to reduce the legacy and impact of all levels of neglect. This will be underpinned by a commitment to assessing the impact of interventions on stemming the level of neglect, and reducing the need for statutory intervention in Southwark families.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Families Matter project

12. In April 2014 partners were invited to commit to a programmed approach to

redesign early intervention services to give the best start to every child, young person and family. Following initial meetings of the Families Matter Board and a multi-agency Families Matter workshop on 24 July 2014 a Families Matter Operational Group, chaired by the Director of Education, was established and held its first meeting on 23 September 2014. The operational group will meet monthly and will be governed by a chief officer group led by the Strategic Director for Children's and Adults' Services.

13. Families Matter is Southwark's strategy for ensuring that children, young people and families receive the right early support at the right time to improve outcomes for children across a range of domains including emotional, educational, physical health and mental health. It is designed to prevent their needs from escalating to higher tiers of support and reduce the need for statutory intervention through child protection and care proceedings. It aims to build upon the strengths of existing services, clarify which service needs to intervene and when, and reduce needless overlap and duplication of effort.
14. The Families Matter framework is attached at Appendix A. Families Matter is focused on early intervention, targeted and edge of care support. This equates to levels 2a (Universal Plus), 2b (Targeted) and 3 (Children in Need) of the SSCB Thresholds Framework. Currently the Early Help and Family Focus teams provide support at these levels alongside Southwark's response to the national Troubled Families initiative. These services are all within the scope of the project which will ensure both that services are aligned with the appropriate teams and that the early help offer clearly identifies which services are operating at which levels of the framework. This ensures that they are targeted where they have the best chance of addressing need and improving outcomes with sufficient focus on children who have "low level additional needs which are likely to be short term" (level 2a), children with more complex "additional needs requiring multi-agency intervention" and a "lead professional team around the child" approach (level 2b) and children with "complex needs likely to require longer term intervention" or "at risk of moving to a high level of risk if they do not receive early intervention" (level 3). To inform this, threshold case moderation and service mapping will be undertaken to understand how the thresholds are being applied in practice and which services are operating at each of the threshold levels.
15. The Families Matter model features:
 - a) Effective universal services which prevent problems from arising in the first place. Further strengthening links with early years' providers and schools as evidence demonstrates that early support and education are strong protective factors.
 - b) Services which provide prompt support when problems first emerge in order to prevent them from escalating to a more serious level and/or becoming entrenched and difficult to change.
 - c) More intensive services which reduce the number of children and young people who are at risk of significant harm enabling children and young people to live at home with their families.
16. Other key areas of the project include the development of a Families Matter (Early Help) Strategy to effectively coordinate the councils' early help offer and align with Ofsted requirements, a coherent Early Help Offer for partners and families to enable a clear understanding of the referral process and what services are available at each level of need and an Outcomes Framework to monitor progress. These will all be informed by the SSCB work programme,

statutory guidance, good practice from local authorities, learning from Ofsted inspections and consultation with staff, stakeholders and service users.

Links with other programmes and initiatives

17. The project will draw upon innovation and learning from other programmes and initiatives and make links where appropriate. This includes, but is not limited to, the Early Intervention Foundation, the Early Action Commission, the council's Strategic Budget Savings Programme, the transfer of public health commissioning for 0-5s to the local authority, health and mental health strategies, the Evelina Child Health Partnership work and the DfE Innovation Fund bid.

Local evidence base

18. To accompany the Children and Young People's Plan 2013-16 a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) was produced on early intervention and the best start in life for the 0-4 age group. The council's Public Health team are currently producing a Neglect JSNA which comprises a comprehensive literature review, data analysis and stakeholder interviews. Data and feedback from the early help service will feed into this and the results will be used to inform early help priorities and identify any additional services that need to feed in to the early help offer. It is anticipated that this will be completed in early 2015 as the literature review has been completed, data analysis is currently in progress and stakeholder interviews will be aligned with the Families Matter Strategy consultation process between December 2014 and February 2015.
19. The SSCB Outcomes Framework includes a number of early help measures. Comparisons between 2012/13 and 2013/14 demonstrate that the number of early help assessments increased by 25% (from 2276 to 2830) and the number of referrals to social care decreased by 8% (from 3450 to 3165). The number of cases received by early help as a step down from social care increased from 15 in Q1 2013/14 to 50 in Q4 (+233%). Work is being undertaken to understand these figures and the relationship between increased early help referrals and lower referrals into social care.
20. The Early Help Service produces a quarterly performance report and data for 2013/14 demonstrates that the largest proportion of assessments come from primary schools followed by the health visiting service. 45% of assessments were for children in the pre-school age range (0-4), 43% for the primary school age range (5-11) and the remaining 12% for children in the secondary school children age range (12-19). Validated attendance data for 2012/13 shows that Southwark attendance is exceeding national attendance by 0.2%, while provisional figures for September 2013 - May 2014 show that both absence and persistent absence in Southwark have fallen by 0.5% since 2012/13. There have been no primary permanent exclusions in Southwark since 2008 and the number of fixed term exclusions has fallen steadily since 2007, with a marked improvement from 1% in 2011/12 to 0.43% in 2012/13 coinciding with the introduction of the Early Help Service. The number of exclusions in secondary schools supported by the Early Help Service has also steadily reduced from 231 in 2010/11 to 68 in 2012/13, a 71% reduction. The take up of free early learning by 3 and 4 year olds has improved from 83% in 2012 to 88% in 2013 narrowing the gap with Inner London and national take up.
21. While currently there is an emphasis on younger children, work is underway to

develop an early help approach to older children who may be in need as a result of the long-term effects of childhood neglect. This can manifest itself in crime and anti-social behaviour, poor school attendance and behavioural and mental health difficulties. Given that the majority of children enter care in their adolescence, there is a clear imperative to strengthen support to young people and enable them to remain safely in their families and communities.

Timescales

22. Development of a Families Matter Strategy and work on the redesign of processes and services will take place concurrently. The service mapping and a draft strategy will be in place by the end of November 2014 with consultation on the strategy will take place between December 2014 and February 2015. The Families Matter Strategy, service redesign and early help offer will all be fully implemented by 1 April 2015. The timeline is outlined in the table below.

Deliverable	Indicative delivery date
Hold Families Matter Operational Group meetings monthly – currently planned to the end of the year	23 rd September 2014 23 rd October 2014 27 th November 2014
Complete case moderation work and feedback to SSCB on any implications from this work for the multi-agency thresholds	By end October 2014
Map early help services against the framework	By end November 2014
Draft Families Matter Strategy for consultation	By end November 2014
Consult on Families Matter Strategy including data set on activity, quality and outcomes	December 2014 and January, February 2015
Implement the Council re-design of services	By 1 April 2015
SSCB to agree Families Matter strategy	By end March 2015
Deliver coherent early help offer available to partners and families	From 1 April 2015

AUDIT TRAIL

Cabinet Member	Councillor Victoria Mills	
Lead Officer	Merril Haeusler, Director of Education	
Report Authors	Beckie Bowler, Principal Strategy Officer	
Version	Final 1.0	
Dated	6 October 2014	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments Included
Director of Legal Services	No	No
Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services	No	No
Director of Strategy and Commissioning, Children's and Adults'	Yes	Yes
Director of Children's Social Care	Yes	Yes
Cabinet Member	Yes	Yes
Date final report sent to Scrutiny Team	7 October 2014	

Appendix A - Families Matter Framework

Families Matter is focused on early intervention, targeted and edge of care support. This equates to levels 2a (Universal Plus), 2b (Targeted) and 3 (Children in Need) of the SSCB Thresholds Framework.

