

Children & Young People Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Early Help - One year on

17 November 2020

1. Recommendation

That the content of this report is noted.

2. The purpose of the report is to:

- Explain the vision for the Early Help Offer.
- Provide an update on the progress of the Early Help Team.
- Provide both quantitative and qualitative information about the performance of the new team.
- Provide evidence of feedback in relation to impact and quality of the service.

This report analyses the development and growth in the Early Help Offer since September 2019.

3. Purpose of the Early Help Offer

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 and Keeping Children Safe in Education 2020 are key documents which state the importance of the early identification of help and support for children, young people and their families, from the emergence of an issue. This could be at any point in their lives, from pre-birth to 19, or 24 years old if the young person has Special Educational Needs or Disabilities.

- 3.1 Multi agency partners deliver a range of Early Help interventions within their own context and settings; from signposting to a useful website through to more intensive support, targeted at areas of identified need. Figure 1 illustrates the spectrum of Early Help support called the Stepped Approach.

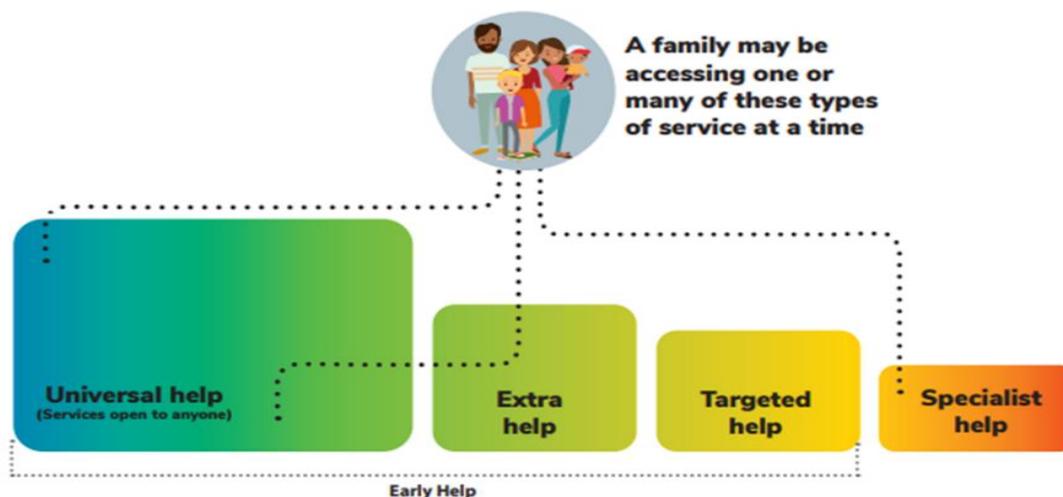


Figure 1 - The Stepped Approach

- 4.1 During the completion of the new Early Help Pathway Assessment, practitioners talk to families about the issues they are facing and then write a short narrative in the appropriate box in the triage tool, based upon presentation of complexity. This serves as the baseline for the intervention and enables a support plan to be written and actioned. At the end of the intervention, the triage tool is repeated in an Early Help Pathway Closure, to demonstrate the impact made on family progress.
- 4.2 The Early Help Monitoring Team analyses all triage narratives written at assessment and closure, then turns them into codes to be measured through automated reporting. This method means that families and practitioners can discuss their issues without feeling they need to “tick boxes”, while still allowing progress to be captured and quantified.

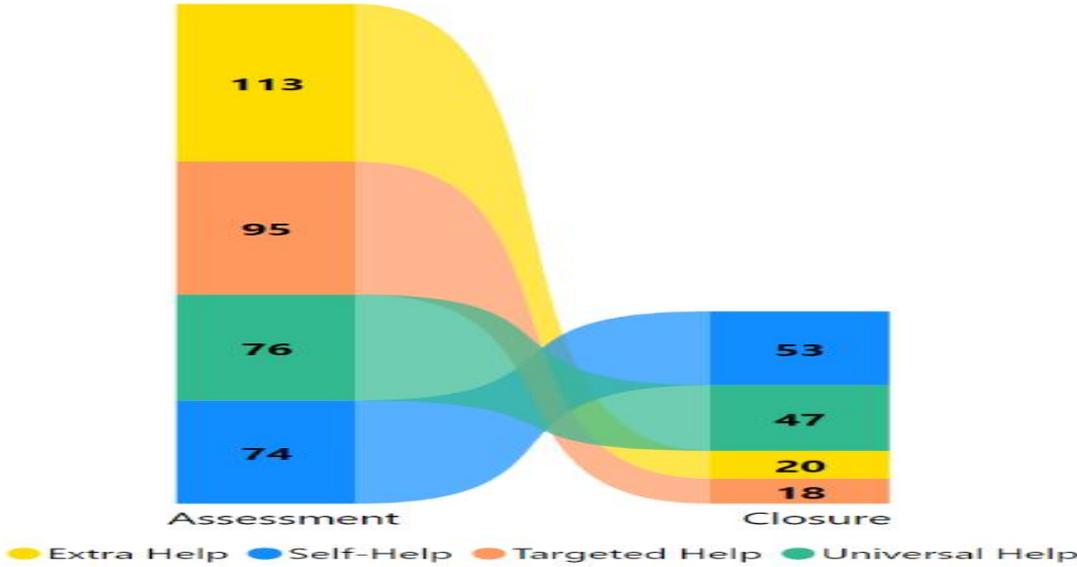


Figure 3 - Triage issues identified

- 4.3 Between 1st April and 30th September 2020, there were 132 triages completed at assessment stage, and 81 triages completed at closure stage. As shown in Figure 3 (above) and analysed Table 1 (below), there was a significant decrease in the percentage yellow and orange issues identified between assessment and closure. **This is a demonstrable positive impact on families, showing an overall reduction in the need for extra and targeted help.**

Triaged Issues	Assessment Stage		Closure Stage		Difference
	Count	%	Count	%	%
No. of triages with blue issues identified (self-help)	74	56%	53	65%	17% increase in self-help
No. of triages with green issues identified (universal help)	76	58%	47	58%	No change in universal help
No. of triages with yellow issues identified (extra help)	113	86%	20	25%	71% decrease in need at extra help level

Table 1 – Analysis of triage issues identified at assessment and closure

No. of triages with orange issues identified (targeted help)	95	72%	18	22%	69% decrease in need at targeted help level
No. of triages completed	132		81		

- 4.4 Reporting on blue issues has shown a positive increase in levels of self-help at closure, but no change in levels of green issues requiring universal help. This is likely a result of families and practitioners not yet being accustomed to “strengths-based” closures, to discuss how well the family is managing in other areas, rather than just re-triaging issues that have been resolved. This is an area for development which is being monitored as part of the service’s corrective actions.
- 4.5 **Early Help Pathway Outcomes** - In addition to measuring the overall impact of Early Help Pathways on family progress; specific outcomes are also monitored. As shown in Figure 4, 53% of situations for children and their families closed positively between 1st April and 30th Sept 2020 – meaning the Lead Professional closed their support due to identified actions being addressed and/or families feeling like they have positively resolved their issues.

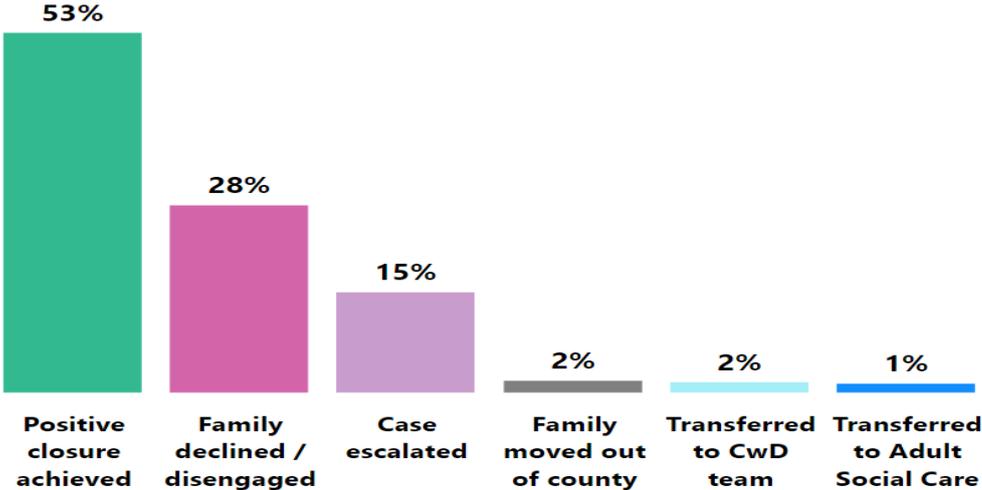


Figure 4 - Case Outcomes

- 4.6 A small number of children appropriately transferred to other services as part of the child’s journey such as to Adult Social Care or to the Children with Disabilities team (3%), and a further 2% closed due to family relocation. 15% of support was escalated to be delivered by Children’s Social Care, which is appropriate given the impact of COVID 19.
- 4.7 Further analysis is needed to understand the high rate of families declining Early Help (either at step-down or as a newly initiated case) or disengaging from their support plan during this period. A proportion of this trend can be attributed to a huge data clean-up that took place between February and June 2020, which closed down over 500 historic Children, Young People or Families support plans on MOSAIC, and is likely to have artificially increased the disengagement rate.

The impact of Covid-19 on maintaining family engagement will also be a contributing factor. Monthly monitoring of this trend will be required moving forward.

4.8 Targeted Support Outcomes - For step-downs from Children’s Social Care, and for issues relating to complex or higher threshold needs, Early Help Pathways are now bolstered with Targeted Support. This involves a Targeted Support Officer (TSO) working closely with the Lead Professional to stabilise and de-escalate family support plans. Outcomes of Targeted Support are measured separately to the wider Early Help Pathway outcomes.

4.9 As shown in Figure 5, 70% of the Children, Young People and Families the TSO’s have worked with experience a positive outcome. They have either de-escalated to a yellow level (which are then supported by the Early Help Monitoring Service) or closed with a positive outcome.

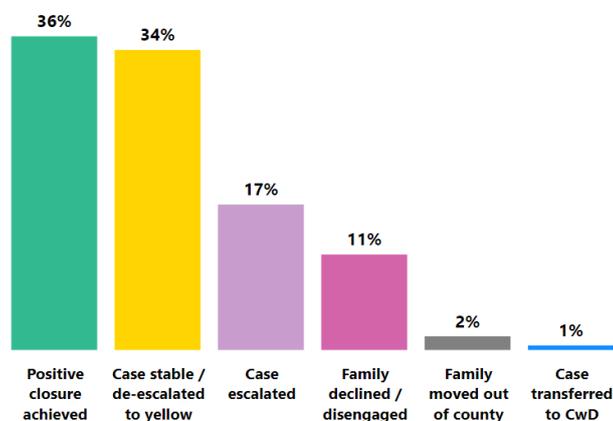


Figure 5 - TSO Case Outcomes

4.10 It is positive that the disengagement rate among Children, Young People and Families the TSO’s have supported is (11%), which is significantly lower when compared with average Early Help Pathway disengagement rates (28%). This demonstrates lower disengagement within higher need families, when Targeted Support is put in place.

4.11 Escalation rates among the Children, Young People and Families TSO’s have supported is (17%) and is slightly higher when compared with average Early Help Pathways (15%). However, as the level of need and complexity is significantly higher for this group, escalating to Children’s Social Care is often appropriate and is to be expected. It is positive that escalation has remained under 20% for this group, despite the unprecedented challenges of Covid-19.

4.12 Step downs from Children’s Social Care is an area of priority for the Early Help team moving forward to ensure that Children and Families are stepped down at the right time and the support they need is continued seamlessly. The new triage process enables social workers to ascertain what level the family are at prior to step down and the process will then track the families progress. The use of the new Early Help Social Worker posts will be instrumental to support this process in the future and performance in this area is monitored monthly.

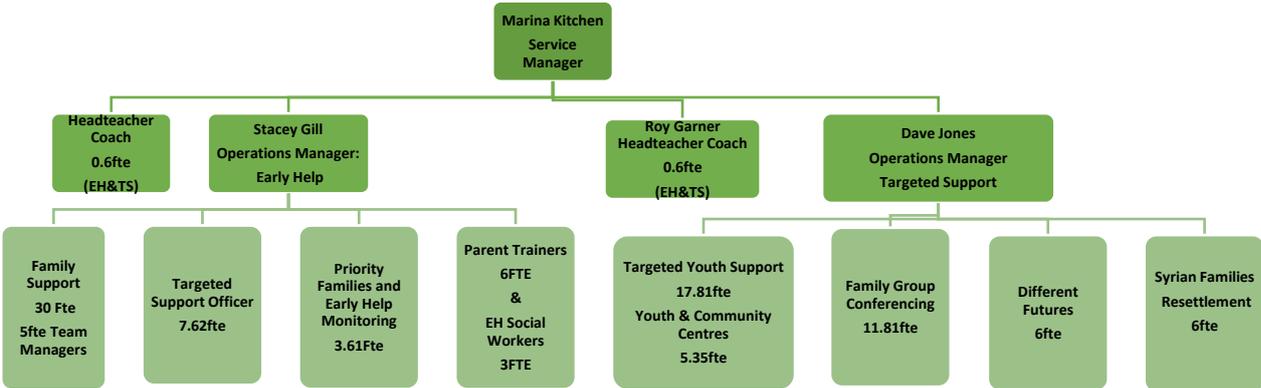
4.13 The redesign in Early Help has provided a robust way of measuring and evidencing impact, and that positive outcomes are being achieved for families (notwithstanding the impact of COVID19). The report will now set out what has changed in Early Help to achieve this overall performance.

5. Structure & establishment

The Early Help team have expanded rapidly over the last year and the redesign has enabled an Early Help Eco System to be implemented and embedded. The Early Help team are integrated as one locality team within the five locality districts; with Early Help Family Support Workers and Targeted Support Officers located in Children and Family Centres. Other colleagues can utilise the space such as Targeted Youth Support, Health Visitors, Midwives and voluntary and community sector colleagues such as Citizens Advice who deliver drop-ins for families to attend.

The structure chart below illustrates an overview of the whole Early Help & Targeted Support service.

Early Help Structure Chart Nov 2020



6. Developments across Early Help

6.1 In September 2019, 44 Family Support Workers (FSWs) from 4 different providers were TUPE'd into WCC. This was the culmination of the 0-5 redesign work which saw the re designation of 14 Children Centres into Children and Family Centres. This milestone has been a major development for the new Early Help service. Targeted Support Officers and Early Help Family Support Workers are located within the Children and Family Centres to create the integrated locality teams.

[Please see separate briefing note in relation to reopening of Children and Family Centres post Covid-19]

6.2 The new Early Help Family Support Service has expanded to incorporate a wider age range. Parenting support is now available for children and young people aged 0 – 19 years, and up to 24 years for those with SEND. Further expansions, in line with the stepped approach include:

6.2.1: The Family Support Line: A telephone helpline is available Monday to Friday 9:00am – 4:00pm. Experienced Family Support Workers from each

locality deliver immediate information, advice and guidance to parents and practitioners within their own locality. This adds value to the intervention as FSWs can connect families to known local resources. Since the launch of the Family Support Line in November 2019, there have been over 950 calls. Between 1st April and 30th Sept 2020, approximately **90%** of the issues discussed with Family Support Workers have gone on to be resolved by the FSW team, while 3% have opened to an Early Help Pathway, 2% have escalated to the MASH, and approximately 5% have been referred elsewhere.

6.2.2: Drops-ins (no appointment necessary): Delivered in a range of community venues (approx. 2 drops ins where delivered in each locality every week) in addition to the Children & Family Centres, these short consultations can build upon the support offered in the Telephone consultations. During the COVID 19, we have been delivering this support via the Family Support Line.

6.2.3: Parenting Courses: The repertoire of group parenting support has also significantly expanded. Parents and Carers can now access short courses that provide essential information and compliment the more in-depth parenting programmes. The inclusion of relational and attachment focused parenting programmes are now being delivered, for example, The Solihull Approach. This is a welcome addition as it focuses on behaviour management, containment and reciprocity and is in alignment with Health Visiting and School Nursing as it is their favoured programme. A number of other programmes have been explored and have been commissioned. However, the Impact of COVID 19 has delayed the ability to train staff in the new programmes due to the restrictions for face to face training. Other programmes that will/are being delivered or have been commissioned include:

Solihull Programme: A foundation parenting programme that emphasises the value of containment, reciprocity and behaviour management (0 – 18 years) when supporting parents with the behaviour of their children.

Sleep Better: All aged programme to support practitioners help parent and carers to understand sleep cycles, common sleep issues and strategies to manage these, establishing appropriate routines, keeping sleep diaries and interpreting the data and environments.

Nurture Programme-Family Links: The Nurture Programme helps parents of children 0-12years. Based on research into family interactions where destructive parental behaviour patterns were identified as problematic. The programme helps families get the best out of family life by focussing on Self-awareness, Appropriate Expectations, Empathy and Positive discipline.

Malachi-Inspiring Futures Programme. This programme is aimed at children and young people of all ages. It supports children and young people's wellbeing and behaviour by supporting their parents and carers think and act differently about attachment, communication, relationship dynamics and much more. It

The Incredible Years: Programme based upon child development theory that helps parents and carers strengthen parent child/interaction relationship and attachment. Supportive of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and is the Early Help intervention endorsed by RISE to support the relationships for reduction of Child to Parent Violence (6-12years)

Heart to Heart: A programme that empowers practitioners with the latest attachment theory about attachment security and operationalises it with a Parent/Adolescent relationship (10 – 15 years) to develop stronger attachment and security through practical application.

Parenting Apart: Early Help are entering a pilot with Parenting Apart as a programme that supports parents (of children of all ages) deal with parental conflict. The programme is a mixture of family support and mediation to move parents past intensive and ongoing conflict and to hold the experience of their child in mind.

- 6.3** Within the new strategic approach to early help is increased focus on our partnership working with nursery's, schools and colleges within each locality. There is increased collaboration between Children and Families and Education Services which has enabled new approaches to be implemented including regular strategic and local operational meeting with headteachers and designated safeguarding leads. These relationships have led to new exciting opportunities

In November 2020, specific courses are being delivered to groups of Newly Qualified Teachers, Recently Qualified Teachers and Newly Qualified Social Workers, in relation to *Managing Childrens Behaviour* and *The Importance of Routines and Boundaries*, based upon Solihull approach principles. These CPD events will be available to approx. 400 professionals in November 2020 and will be repeated annually to develop the workforce in basic children's behaviour management and will develop the use of a common approach.

- 6.4 Parent Trainers** - As part of the expansion of Early Help there have been 6 fixed term roles allocated for Parent Trainers. These specialist roles will be based in pairs across the county (2 workers in the North, 2 workers in the East and 2 in the South) and they will take responsibility for the delivery of a varied and scheduled programme of parenting training. The primary focus will be the delivery of courses for parents and carers to attend when they need them but will also include CPD to schools and community groups. The intention of delivering basic knowledge to schools and community groups will be to increase the capacity, capability and confidence of members to provide guidance and help parents to self-support and help one another.

- 6.5 One to One support for families** – Early Help Family Support Workers can now be accessed for direct one to one work through a “FSW Intervention” in two ways:

- 6.5.1** Where the needs are specifically parenting related, families can access support via a direct referral, without the need for an Early Help multi-agency assessment. This is enabling services such as health and schools to act early and refer into the service to support a family's situation and prevent escalation. From 1st Oct 2019 to 30th Sept 2020, there were 672 direct

referrals made into the service, and over 500 families opened and received direct support.

6.5.2 Where the situation is more complex and multi-agency work is required, Family Support Workers can be accessed once an Early Help Pathway has been initiated. The Family Support Workers will work alongside the other multi agency professionals to support the family plan, or, where appropriate, will also act the Lead Professional to coordinate the intervention. As of 30th September 2020, 25% of Early Help Pathways were supported by a Family Support Worker.

6.6 As with Early Help Pathways, a record management process was designed for one-to-one family support, allowing for monitoring of all FSW Interventions. From 1st April to 30th September, outcomes for FSW Interventions were 74% positive, with Children and their Families closing or transferring positively. Disengagement rates were similar to Early Help Pathways, at 15%. It is positive that escalation was very low during this period, with just 4% of Children and Families transferring into Safeguarding and Support.

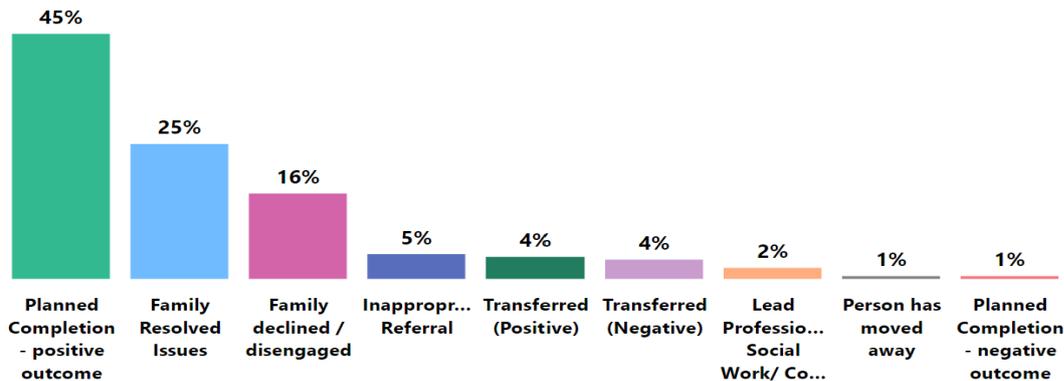


Figure 6 - FSW Intervention Outcomes

6.7 The average duration of FSW Interventions is currently 18 weeks, with Family Support Workers currently allocated to an average of 31 children each, against an average target of 22 allocations. Outcomes, allocations and timescales are all being carefully monitored by Family Support Team Leader to better understand the impact of COVID 19 on the service.

6.8 Further developments coming soon - The service will benefit from **3 Early Help Social Worker** posts as a pilot for one year. This crucial element will expand the skill set and will provide direct consultation to practitioners in the network in relation to Early Help level Children and Families, focusing on Targeted Help level (Orange Level). In addition, there may be occasions they will also deliver appropriate direct intervention to families to prevent escalation to Childrens social care. Should there be an open case that will require escalation, the social worker will be instrumental in supporting the development of a new process that will see the direct allocation

for assessment in Initial Response rather than the case having to be assessed by the MASH.

In addition, we have entered a collaboration with The Nuneaton Academy. We are jointly funding (Early help is funding 30% and The Nuneaton Academy funding 70%) an Early Help Social Worker post who will be based in Early Help and located in the School. This is a pilot for 1 year and an evaluation will be completed to understand the benefits of this model. This is a pilot for 1 year.

6.9 Targeted Support Officers - Targeted Support Officers (TSOs) play a crucial role in the Early Help network. They support complex “Orange” level Children and Families (tier 3) to safely stay in the Early Help and work to ensure all preventative measures have been enabled and deployed to prevent escalation to Childrens Social Care, thus effectively managing demand. In addition, they support step downs from Childrens Social care directly to the Early Help Network. The team directly support Lead Professionals and other practitioners by attending Family Support Meetings supporting issues triaged as Orange and model Restorative Practice. In November 2019, the Targeted Support Officers moved into locality teams, to further enable the locality support agenda to come to fruition. In addition, the Target Support Officers deliver a programme of training to multi agency partners.

7. New Training Offer

7.1 Due to the restructure in Education Services and the disbandment of the Education Safeguarding Service from July/Aug 2020, all Designated Safeguarding Lead Training is now delivered by the Targeted Support Officers. This arrangement has been initiated following the strong partnership developed between Education Services and Children and Families to integrate the activities formally undertaken by the Education Safeguarding Team within both services. Included in the DSL training, alongside essential safeguarding knowledge, is a fresh, new positive approach to the DSL role and the partnership Children and Families have with Education Service colleagues and now with schools. 9 sessions delivered to 122 delegates so far. Metric -36 confidence to +51

7.2 There has been an overall **43.5% increase in confidence** (bear in mind most delegates were already DSLs. In addition, all training is counted, including Early Help)

	Confidence before	Confidence after	% increase	Overall score
Early Help Training	5.1	7.9	54%	8.2
Refresher	7.9	9.2	16%	9
Initial	5.8	8.3	43%	8

Feedback from the training has been very positive and includes comments as follows:

- *“Thanks for your training sessions, they really have been very helpful. I did the Early Help one in the summer and the DSL last week. Apart from it being on zoom, I do think it was the best DSL training I’ve had, so thank you for that.*

- *“Messages are now aligned – all makes more sense!”*
- *“I have much more clarity of where to go if I need help”.*
- *“I have re discovered my motivation for the DSL role again, thank you!”*

The TSOs also deliver a range of other training courses and facilitate network partnership meetings and by the time this report is received by Overview and Scrutiny they will have delivered 18 training days to Designated Safeguarding leads and other professionals.

8. Headteacher Coaches:

8.1 An area of concern that needed to be addressed was the confidence levels of Designated Safeguarding Leads in schools, to hold and to support Children and Families of complexity and to lessen their reliance on the MASH. Research conducted with DSLs identified the need to provide additional support to increase capability, capacity and confidence in DSLs across the county. The role will help schools to develop an Early Help infrastructure if this is not already in existence and will help schools critically evaluate their current early help arrangements. The role will connect them to their locality partnership of practitioners and will aid by reducing demand on the MASH.

8.2 Two new (0.6 posts-fixed term for 2 years) have been created and prerequisite for any potential candidate was to have held significant experience in senior leadership in school. The first Headteacher Coach started in Sept 2020 having retired from a Warwickshire school in July 2020 after 28 years in Headship. This is already paying dividends.

9. Priority Families and the Early Help Monitoring service:

9.1 Priority Families continue to perform to an excellent standard, ranking 1st across all local authorities in the West Midlands. However, there are significant challenges to this continued performance due to Covid-19, including additional auditing requirements from MHCLG, and reduced data sharing capacity.

9.2 A new arm to the Priority Families Team was created in February 2020 called The Early Help Monitoring Service, which followed a review of the Targeted Support Officer service. This review illustrated that a realignment of skills and focus was required. The new monitoring team (consisting of 2 analysts – 1.6fte) has responsibility for monitoring and having oversight of over 1500 children open to Early Help across Warwickshire, to ensure all Early Help Pathways are meeting timescales and that documentation is of good quality. They also have full circulation details of all Lead Professionals across the county, by district, which ensures a consistency of messaging and communication.

10. Partnership working

Early Help has changed radically over the last year and has seen support available for families accessed sooner. For this transition to occur, our locality working has and is currently supporting the development of a number of network opportunities, which in turn, creates the development of positive working relationships, dissemination and explanation of information and much greater connectivity.

10.1 Networks

Early Help have existing networks and some that are planned to start imminently. The purpose of the networks is to share best practice; support information sharing, creates resilience, capability, capacity and confidence in the multi-agency partners, they include:

- 10.1.1: LEAPS:** Local Early Action Partnerships are strategic meetings held in each locality and are attended by leaders from local services such as Police, Targeted Youth and School Health. Data is used to ascertain local priorities and collective action plans are formulated to work upon as a locality leadership team.
- 10.1.2: Headteacher forums:** Monthly forums delivered virtually for 1 hour by Marina Kitchen, aims to develop positive working relationships with Headteachers and the Children & Families Service. Updates from practice and the Transformation Programme are shared and speakers are suggested by the Heads on areas of interest to them. Sessions have received very positive feedback. Schedule as follows:

May 2020	Parenting Support Offer – support through lockdown
June 2020	RISE/CW Mind - COVID response. What you need to know
July 2020	Planning sessions and summer wrap up
Sept 2020	Looking at your Locality Data with Amy Burnage – Insight Analyst
Oct 2020	Adult Mental Health
Nov 2020	Citizens Advice – Debt and Benefits
Dec 2020	Special Guardianship Support

- 10.1.3: Early Help Networks** (1.5 hours termly): Delivered by Targeted Support Officers - to enable multi agency partners to come together and hear updates from colleagues and partners in their own locality
- 10.1.4: Family Support Networks:** (1-hour bimonthly) by locality delivered by the Family Support Team Leaders. To enable any worker in a pastoral role, be that a Family Support worker in a school, faith-based organisation or voluntary capacity to come together with WCC FSWs and share best practice, hints and tips. The use of Restorative Problem-Solving Circles helps non WCC FSWs to resolve issues locally and can prevent escalation of need. It also provides a safe space to share worries as an informal group supervision session.
- 10.1.5 DSL Networks** – (2 hours termly) under development. To bring together, by locality, the Designated Safeguarding leads. Led by the Headteacher Coach, to ensure that they have a local community of support. The use of Restorative Problem-Solving Circles to resolve issues locally and can prevent escalation of need. It also provides a safe space to share worries as an informal group supervision session.

11. COVID 19 response

- Due to the COVID19 pandemic, Early Help & Targeted have continued to support children young people and families virtually.
- Family Support Workers worked in partnership with the District and Borough Council shielding hubs to support extremely vulnerable families who were shielding.
- Drop ins were unable to happen due to social distancing guidance so this was incorporate into The Family Support Line. Once this had become established the FSWs amended their support to meet the needs of the families, such as via Email, Text, WhatsApp facetime and Messenger in addition to phone and Microsoft Teams.
- Virtual parenting sessions have been delivered via Microsoft teams; short courses and the Malachi Programme

12. Focused developments in 2020/2021

Whilst the last 12 months has seen an intensive focus of the redesign of teams, the development of the Early Help culture, paperwork, outcomes and impact recording and reporting methodologies, the creation of networks and forums and the positive implementation of all the above. In September 2020, the Early Help Team won the Children and Families award for Team of the Year and is aiming for next year to be as equally successful by focusing on the following 5 priorities.

1. Redesign the step down and step up procedure to enable a straightforward and simple way to enable families to access the right support at the right time.
2. Expand and deliver the newly commissioned repertoire of parenting programmes
3. Embed the developments in Schools & Education settings by continuing to embed the new Early Help processes and procedures in schools
4. Increase knowledge and understanding of Early Help and Targeted Support systems and processes in Early Years and Childminder colleagues.
5. Increase our focus on working with colleagues in Health and the Police

Supporting Documents

None

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The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

Local Member(s): None

Other members: Members of the Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee