



Early Help Partnership Strategy

Wednesday 2nd July 2014

Agenda item: 7

Sarah Ferguson, Service Director: Enhanced and Preventative Services, Cambridgeshire County Council

1. Purpose / recommendation

To seek Children's Trust Board input into the development of a joint early help strategy for Cambridgeshire. Specifically the Board are asked to

- a) Consider and comment on an initial discussion paper which outlines a set of principles for joint early help work and a different relationship between families, communities and public services. This paper is attached as appendix 1.
- b) Consider the summary of feedback from recent multi-agency workshops and identify themes or ideas which the Board would like to see developed as collaborative projects. This feedback is attached as appendix 2
- c) To seek the Children's Trust endorsement to 'owning' the Early Help Strategy for Cambridgeshire

2. Background

'Early Help' refers to preventative and early intervention support provided to families which is aimed at stopping problems deepening, avoiding crises and ultimately reducing the demand for specialist and statutory intervention services.

Early help is provided by all organisations within the Children's Trust and all partners across the children's system. The principle applies equally to all areas of the Trust's work including safeguarding, family functioning, family health and mental health, work to support inclusion, educational achievement, special educational needs, further learning and employment prospects and issues such as poverty, offending and substance misuse.

The early help offer in Cambridgeshire is strong, with good services underpinned by well-developed collaborative working arrangements, including the Common Assessment Framework (CAF), Model of Staged Intervention (MOSI), Information Sharing Agreements, joint workforce development, Together for Families partnership and Multi-Agency Referral Unit (MARU). However, the economic climate, population growth and changing demographics mean that families are facing new and greater challenges at the same time that all public services are facing decreasing budgets and change on an unprecedented scale. This context makes it necessary to review our early help arrangements and approach and seek different solutions across organisations and with communities.



For the County Council there is a need to find nearly £6m savings from the Local Authority budget for Enhanced and Preventative Services of around £19m. This is being taken forward through an internal review which has led to the development of an informal consultation paper about the future focus and structure of these Council teams. The link to this consultation is referenced at the end of this paper.

The savings requirement on the County Council early help services is replicated across Trust membership and we should recognise that public services provided by the Children's Trust's organisations will be unable to employ as many practitioners and work directly with as many children and families as previously. The suggested focus therefore is on building resilient communities with networks of support based more on the existing strengths of local people and less on the intervention of services.

3. Developing a new partnership approach to Early Help – alongside families and communities

Work has begun to explore this different approach to early help. The discussion paper attached as appendix 1 proposes a revised model which places less emphasis on public agencies stepping in to provide services and greater emphasis on identifying the strengths and capacity in each family and each community using these as the basis for change. This approach is predicated on an assumption that most children do well in the protective environment of their families, communities and schools. It should be the role of public bodies to facilitate good local support networks and create communities which are making good connections with and for families.

The discussion paper sets out proposed principles which suggest that; our early help strategy should;

1. Be based and designed within communities
2. Support families as a whole; building on their strengths and creating resilience
3. Be joined up and coherent across organisations and sectors
4. Be flexible and creative, helping families with a wide range of issues
5. Offer clear targeted support to the right families and demonstrate impact and evidence
6. Provide a seamless interface with specialist services where required

These suggested principles reflect emerging thinking - challenge and debate is invited.



During April and May 2014, a series of early help stakeholder meetings were held across the County to test this thinking across agencies and seek ideas and input towards a partnership early help strategy. Over 290 staff from a wide range of services attended and key themes from the workshops are below, along with examples of specific ideas which might be explored. A fuller summary of messages emerging from the events is attached as Appendix 2 and the Trust Board are invited to review this and identify emerging ideas ideas which should be the priority to take forward.

Supporting community and voluntary sector development, including;

- Promoting a network of community navigators and mentors for children and families (learning from the adults model)
- Opening up children's centres and other hubs for volunteer-led support
- Employing a dedicated fundraiser / support officer to help local groups access/bid for funding

Communication and information sharing, including;

- Giving local people and local organisations a single, live information source to find out and share what's happening locally and to see the full range of support available from all sectors. This needs to build on existing resources.

Empowering, engaging and listening to families and young people including;

- Learning more from voluntary organisations about different ways of delivering services
- Developing community mentors and breaking down red tape barriers to community initiative

Taking a whole-family approach across organisations, including;

- Joint commissioning and alignment of services, in particular aligning health and adult services into localities.
- Schools or the local authority running joint programmes for parents and young people – teaching children and simultaneously building the ability of parents to support their child's learning
- Enhancing the awareness and information flows between adults services about the needs of children, helping adults-focussed teams consider and identify vulnerable children and join up support

Earlier intervention, including

- The development of risk indicator tools to identify children at risk of not making good progress at primary age (currently used later for 14-19 year olds)
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Focusing on Transition points including;

- The transition between early years and primary school, ensuring information flows back and forth between early years settings and schools

Workforce development, including;

- Sharing and pooling the expertise from across organisations, promoting peer support and mentoring.
- Empowering staff with small flexible budgets to support families
- Developing staff skills and knowledge to enable greater flexibility to work across a wider range of family needs, particularly early support around mental health issues

Implementing these ideas and developing a community-led model will need to be partnership endeavours and represent significant areas of work. Community development and leadership is already undertaken across Trust partners and there are potentially opportunities to join up this arrangements and this capacity to maximise its effectiveness.

There are opportunities to develop a more integrated delivery model for some services such as community health services working more closely alongside Locality teams. The newly established Joint Commissioning Board brings together Cambridgeshire County Council, the Clinical Commissioning Group and NHS England. Discussions will be developed there, as a move towards a more functionally integrated service offer continues to be discussed across providers.

It may be beneficial to consider how adult, family and children's services organised at a local level could work more closely alongside District Council community Development functions where they exist. Similarly, as we look to ensure that physical community resources are fully exploited, looking to how the offer from Children's Centres, Libraries and Community Hubs are aligned more fully could bring efficiencies and a more joined up approach to community facing services.

4 Next Steps

If the Children's Trust Board are supportive of these proposals and the direction of travel, it is suggested that a sub-group of representatives from partners is convened to develop the discussion paper and initial ideas into a firmer set of proposals.

The group would be responsible for developing a strategy document to be approved by the Trust Board in the autumn of 2014 and an associated action plan detailing the projects which can be taken forward jointly.



5. Questions / decisions required

The Trust Board are invited to consider:

- Whether Board members support the strategic direction as described and the intention to shift the focus of early help towards building resilient families and resilient communities with a reduced direct offer of services.
- The potential benefits and risks of such an approach
- What would need to be different for this community and strengths based model to succeed
- The specific opportunities for trust partners to collaborate or align work and teams in taking forward this work, and specifically to request that the Early Help Strategy is one which is 'owned' by the Children's Trust.
- The proposed next steps

6. Source documents and where they are held

County Council Committee Children and Young People Committee papers including the informal consultation regarding the review within Enhanced and Preventative Services Directorate are available on the CCC website below.

<http://www2.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/CommitteeMinutes/Committees/AgendaItem.aspx?agendaItemID=9804>
