



LSCB

Bath & North East Somerset
Local Safeguarding Children Board

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Report Title Themed Review – Early Help	Agenda Item xx
Date of Meeting 6 th September 2016	Author: Debbie Forward with contributions from Chrissie Hardman, Jackie Fielder, Sally Churchyard, Caroline Dowson, Loes Savine and Marcia Burgham, Suzanne Cheng and Paula Bromley.
Appendix 1: Early Help Windscreen Appendix 2: Early Help (CAF) report Appendix 3: Early Help case studies and feedback from young people	
Recommendation/Decision required/ from LSCB <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. LSCB is asked to discuss the initial findings in the report and the discussion points in section 8 of the report.2. To receive a further report in December around revised arrangements for quality assurance and governance.3. To receive an annual report each September on the effectiveness of Early Help	
Introduction <p>Early help is a priority for LSCB and this themed review aims to gain a more accurate picture of how effectively local partnership arrangements for early help services are improving children and family outcomes, reducing risks and preventing them from escalating (or taking further action where they do). The themed review will take the following structure:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Brief introduction to Early Help and outline of the session.2. Small group discussions - Early Help Board members to facilitate.3. Feedback and agree LSCB actions <p>Members are asked to read the background papers, case studies and consider the questions in section 8 in advance of the meeting.</p>	

The Report:

1. Background

Key Priority 1 of the LSCB Business Plan is that LSCB will co-ordinate a multi-agency approach to reducing harm to vulnerable children and young people. This includes the development of an Early Help Strategy. This review took place in August and is based on desk top analysis of service provision and Q1 reporting information, with input and feedback from colleagues.

B&NES has a well-embedded Early Help offer and a range of services that make a contribution through the CAF and integrated working. The Ofsted expectation is that local areas have written strategies in place for Early Help. The importance of Early Help and engaging a wider range of partners was supported at the LSCB away day in November 2014. The Early Help Strategy was developed with input from a broad range of agencies on the Early Help Board and signed off by LSCB in December 2015.

2. The Early Help Strategy

Within our strategy there is a shared and agreed definition of early help as follows: “Early Help means providing effective support to children and young people as soon as needs start to be identified, and to bring about change to prevent these from escalating and leading to poor outcomes. Early Help may occur at any point when need arises, from pregnancy through to teenage years and early adulthood”.

The model of Early Help described in the strategy is based on the approach set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015. This is a structured process which involves agencies working together to:

- **Identify in a timely way** children and families in need and who would benefit from Early Help
- Undertake an **assessment of need**
- Focus support and interventions to address identified needs and improve **outcomes** through a **jointly agreed plan**.

The strategy reflects that early help extends beyond the CAF and includes targeted support provided on the basis of a single agency assessment where single agency response is sufficient to meet needs.

The strategy is part of the Children and Young Peoples plan and is overseen by a multi-agency Early Help Board which in turn reports to the Children and Young People’s Sub Group of the Health and Wellbeing Board.

The Early Help Strategy can be found at: [EH Strategy on LSCB website](#)

3. Arrangements in place to provide Early Help to families in B&NES

Early Help is provided by a range of agencies and covers a broad spectrum of activity undertaken in both universal and preventative early help services. We have a comprehensive range of good quality universal health and education provision in

B&NES, including Maternity, Health Visitor and School Nurse Service, early years and school settings as well as a wide variety of provision delivered by the community and voluntary sector. Universal services are usually sufficient to meet the needs of children and young people through the provision of social, emotional and developmental support. They have a strong role in preventing problems occurring and providing additional support when they do. Universal services also play a critical role in supporting children, young people and families to access additional targeted support to meet additional or more complex needs. An example of how a family moves through services is shown in Appendix 1.

Commissioners and providers have been working closely to better align and integrate preventive early help services. A new Family Support and Play Service has recently been commissioned which brings together work with children and parents into a whole family service. This new service will start in November and will work closely with Children Centre services and Connecting Families to form a more clearly defined and coordinated early help offer to families.

Preventative early help services which provide targeted support include:

- Children Centre Services- families with children aged 0-5 years (B&NES and First Steps)
- Family Support and Play Service (starts in November delivered by Southside partnership with BAPP) - families with children aged 5 plus
- Connecting Families (B&NES) families with complex need and children aged 0- 19
- Youth Connect targeted support (B&NES) - young people
- Compass (B&NES) - young people
- Mentoring Support (Mentoring Plus) - young people

Support available

The Integrated Working Team supports all arrangements for Common Assessments and related activity, including Team around the Child/Family and the role of lead professionals, to ensure that effective preventative support is offered to children, young people and families. The team offers training, support and guidance across the workforce to ensure common assessments are used appropriately to identify needs at the earliest stage.

Regular training is provided on Early Help each year as part of our multi-agency workforce development. Last year, 7 training sessions were delivered to the wider workforce on undertaking a CAF, listening to the voice of the child, lead professional/Team around the Child, Understanding the Cycle of Change and Initiating and recording difficult conversations. A total of 155 training places were offered and this was attended by 88 practitioners.

Quality Assurance

All LSCB agencies are responsible for ensuring there are regular supervision arrangements in place for staff delivering early help, for providing appropriate management sign off for CAFs and providing review updates to the Integrated Working Team updated. A CAF audit group undertakes an audit of 5 CAF assessments each quarter and provides feedback to those practitioners completing

the forms and their managers. The CAF report which forms appendix 2 highlights recurrent issues regarding the quality of assessments. The group and audit tool is currently being reviewed and membership of the group broadened to increase accountability. Consideration should be given as to whether this should be included within the quality assurance framework of LSCB. This report recommends that this group links into the Professional Practice Group (PPG) and that an update report is brought back to the LSCB in December. Work has also started on the development of a common set of quality standards/criteria for all early help assessments, plans and reviews. This will be undertaken as a task and finish group of the Early Help Board and consulted on.

Early Help is a broad area and there are other groups and plans in place which have oversight over specific areas and these are outside the scope of this review. They include:

- Children and Young people at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE).
- Children and young people with behavioural needs delivered through the B&NES Strategy for Behaviour, Emotional and Social Difficulties 2016-19
- Children and young people with emotional/mental health needs, delivered through the Children and Young Peoples Emotional Health and Wellbeing Plan.
- Children with Special Education Needs (SEND) which is overseen by the SEND partnership group.

4. Reporting and activity in Quarter 1

Currently only information about CAFs is reported into LSCB, but work is underway to develop a core data set which can be readily collated for targeted support delivered by commissioned and council run preventative early help services to show where targeted support sits alongside the safeguarding activity of specialist services. In due course it will establish a baseline to enable Service Performance Group and LSCB to consider whether the level of early help activity correlates positively or negatively with the level of referrals into specialist services.

This data was collected in the new format for the first time in Q1, so the data comes with a caveat that there will be some over counting which will resolve over time, so should be regarded as indicative at this stage.

Referrals

Q1 monitoring information from commissioned and B&NES delivered preventative early help services reported just under 500 referrals for targeted support and 96% of these were accepted. This would suggest that thresholds are understood and applied appropriately. The largest source is from health visitors, particularly into Children's Centre services. This is also reflected in the CAF data and reflects good early identification of needs and access to targeted support for children under 5. There are two referrals from housing and none recorded from adult services and these are areas in which we would like to see some growth, following the joint work underway (section 6).

Assessments

All children, young people and families will have an Early Help Assessment in order to ensure they meet the threshold for a targeted support service. Some of

those supported will have been assessed using a CAF (where a multi-agency response is required to meet the needs). Others will have had a single agency assessment where needs can be met by a single agency. A Family Profile assessment is used by Connecting Families. There were 109 CAFs completed in Q1 and further detail is shown in the CAF report. In addition the Q1 monitoring information from commissioned and B&NES delivered preventative early help services shows there were a further 209 single agency early help assessments..

Integrated working

Q1 monitoring shows just over 50% of families/young people receiving preventative early help support on the basis of a single agency assessment, 25% with a CAF and 25% where the child or young person is on a CP or CIN Plan or is looked after.

Safeguarding referrals

There were 13 C2 safeguarding referrals from preventative early help services to social care reported in Q1, 11 where a CAF is place and 2 where a single agency assessment is in place. Whilst the outcome of these is not known at this stage it would indicate that these services are taking appropriate further action where they assess that risks are escalating and have a clear understanding of the thresholds.

5. The impact of Early Help

The positive impact of Early Help is starting to be demonstrated by the number of young people and families achieving positive outcomes as a result of the targeted support they receive. This is evidenced in the quarterly performance monitoring of preventative early help services and the returned CAF review data. It is corroborated by the case studies and feedback from young people and families shown in appendix 3. Progress towards outcomes is measured through a range of tools.

In Q1, the following outcomes were reported:

Family Support

173 family support cases were closed and the following outcomes were reported where there had been an assessed need:

- Of the 16 children aged 0-5 with an assessed need, all made measureable improvement in school readiness
- Of those 104 parents with an assessed need to improve parenting capacity, 96 parents (92%) made a measurable improvement.
- Of 20 parents with an assessed need to keep their children safe, 19 parents (95%) were better able to keep their children safe.

Youth Support

40 youth support cases were closed and the following outcomes achieved (these statistics currently include outcomes achieved for an additional 29 cases receiving ongoing support as currently recorded, so achieved outcomes are expected to increase in Q2):

- 43 (62%) reported increased engagement in education, employment or

training

- 16 (23%) reported increased emotional resilience and social wellbeing
- 29 (42%) reported reduced risk taking and choosing healthier lifestyles

Outcomes which follow TAC meetings are detailed in the CAF report, however the low level reported back to the Integrated working team means a complete picture cannot be shown. However, where information has been submitted following review, improved outcomes are shown in 73% of early help cases.

Connecting Families closed 6 cases in Q1 and the following outcomes were achieved and Payment by Results claimed.

- In 5 families significantly improved school attendance was achieved and sustained
- In 5 families a family member moved off benefits into continuous employment
- In 2 families the level of domestic abuse significantly reduced and was sustained
- In 6 families, parental health (mental health and substance misuse) became better managed and ceased impacting on other family members
- In 4 families children in need of help received support and achieved significant and sustained improvement in their outcomes.

The data shows positive outcomes are being achieved for children, young people and families. This, along with the continued low conversation rate of CAFs into single assessments indicates that early help provisions are also effective at addressing need and managing risk, and this should provide LSCB with a level of assurance. However, this is based on indicative data from one quarter and a recommendation of this paper is that annual report, with a year's data is made to LSCB on the effectiveness of early help each September.

6. Strategic priorities to improve the effectiveness of early help

A number of priorities have been agreed by the Early Help Board to improve the effectiveness and coordination of early help. These are:

- a. To improve access to information for practitioners in all agencies about services available - this was the biggest issue for practitioners to come out of the consultation. As a result an Early Help 'app' has been developed through a multi-agency task and finish group and this is currently being piloted. It will be launched late September.
- b. Improving joint working arrangements at Early Help stage with a wider range of agencies including adult services and housing. A joint piece of work is now underway with Adult Substance - misuse services, Children's Centre and Health Visitor Services. This will improve referral arrangements, co-ordination of support and joint training. An Early Help and Housing task and finish group has met and has started to identify areas to improve joint working between Preventative Early Help and Housing Options and Housing Providers to achieve better family and housing outcomes.
- c. Improving the quality and strengthening governance. A review is taking place

of the quality assurance arrangements in place for the CAF. This will consider the quality assurance of a broader range of early help assessments and plans, the development of quality criteria for these, and how this should link into the wider LSCB quality assurance framework.

- d. Information sharing between agencies. Whilst this has been improving in many areas it still presents challenges to effective joint working in others. One challenge is sharing data sets which contain some personal information which would enable preventative early help services to target their support more effectively. Discussions continue to find ways to do this with the relevant individual consents.
- e. A draft framework and data set to evaluate the effectiveness of Early Help has been drafted through a task and finish group of the Early Help Board (appendix 4). This will be considered at the LSCB Policy, Performance and Management meeting this August.
- f. Exploring options streamline and improve the co-ordination of early help referrals and assessment (such as a single point of entry). A number of meetings have taken place internally to test options out. A couple of initiatives are underway to facilitate this. The Integrated Working team is working closely with the duty social care team to provide support where a referral does not meet the threshold for social care and a CAF is recommended. Connecting Families and the Family Support and Play service will be working together when the new contract starts to pilot a triage and joint allocation process to ensure families with more complex needs receive the most appropriate service.

7. The role and responsibilities of the LSCB.

In its publication 'Early help: whose responsibility?' Ofsted recommends that LSCBs should:

- Critically evaluate the effectiveness of early help and publish these findings in the LSCB annual report
- Monitor the quality of early help assessment, planning and management oversight through effective audit arrangements
- Develop and monitor local quality standards to ensure that professionals have access to effective supervision and management oversight
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the LSCB threshold document to ensure that it is understood and used appropriately by partner agencies and that children and families are helped effectively as a result
- Monitor and evaluate whether children's emerging needs are appropriately met elsewhere when referrals to children's social care do not meet the locally agreed threshold for statutory intervention
- Ensure that all professionals working with families receive effective early help training.

8. Group discussion:

1. Based on the information in this paper and your agency's experience, are you assured that early help in B&NES is effective? If not what else would you like to see?
2. How confident are you in your agency that where you are delivering early help to children and families, that they know what is in their plan?
3. Can you share your experience of quality assuring the delivery of early help, either in your agency or through the CAF group?