

Meeting Title	Children and Young People’s Scrutiny Committee
Report Title	Review of the Early Help Strategy
Meeting Date	28 th March 2024

Corporate Director(s)/Director(s):	Catherine Underwood, Corporate Director for People Ailsa Barr, Director for Children’s Integrated Services
Portfolio Holder(s):	Councillor Cheryl Barnard
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Summary of issues:
Review of Early Help Strategy:
To assess the impact of the Early Help Strategy and whether it is achieving its intended outcomes
Recommendation(s):
1. Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee confirm its commitment to supporting the Early Help Partnership strategy and its ambition for Early Help to be delivered in partnership with other services.
2. Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee note the progress made since the launch of the strategy and website

1. Early Help in Nottingham City Council

- 1.1 Early Help support through Nottingham City Council is primarily delivered through the City’s four Family Hubs in Bestwood, Broxtowe, Meadows and Hyson Green, the Supporting Families programme, the Best Start for Life Offer, and the Targeted Family Support Teams.
- 1.2 Family Hubs are a single point of access for whole family support and services from conception up to 19 and up to age 25 for children with special education needs or disabilities. Through the Family Hub network, there is a range of services available, some are delivered in the Family Hubs, some are arranged in community and partner venues.
 - Infant feeding support
 - Mental health and wellbeing services, including Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service, Peer support services.
 - Family Support Services
 - Play and learning activities including for the home learning environment
 - Special educational needs support, advice and services
 - Parenting support
 - Healthy Relationships support
 - Domestic Abuse support
 - Young Parents together groups

- Housing, benefit and welfare advice
- Substance misuse (drugs and alcohol) support
- Youth services and Youth Justice

1.3 The Start for Life offer provides information and links to support that is available when families need it, from conception to the baby's second birthday. There is a range of universal services, (open to everyone) and targeted services (available via referral). These include:

- **Universal Services** - Accessing a midwife, Antenatal services, Post Natal support
- **Targeted Services** - Family Nurse Partnership, Teenage midwife, Healthy Little Minds

1.4 The Supporting Families programme, funding and Whole Family Working underpins Nottingham City Council's Early Help services. This National Programme, (formerly called "Troubled Families 2012-2021"), was originally funded by Department of Levelling Up Housing & Communities and is now funded by Department for Education.

1.5 It has 3 main goals:

- Ensure partners work together to help whole families so they get the same kind of help across all services.
- Change how Early Help services work so they are more connected and work together.
- Use data to understand what families need and get better at helping them.

Service users

1.6 Between 01/01/2023 and 28/02/2024, 6,031 individuals received Early Help Support (commencing either an Early Help Episode, or Early Help Brief Assessment). Of those 61% were children and 38% were adults at the start of the support (1% did not have age recorded).

1.7 Between 01/01/2023 and 28/02/2024 Nottingham City Council delivered 3,778 group work sessions, with 18,712 attendees across all sessions, supporting 3,242 registered individuals (in most of the cases an individual would attend multiple sessions and multiple activity types). Of those, 61% were Adult and 39% were children at the time of the session.

2. Background of the strategy

2.1 The Early Help Partnership Strategy (appendix 1) and website was launched 30th Oct 2023 www.earlyhelpnottingham.org.uk.

2.2 The objectives of the strategy are:

- To have a partnership offer with clear referral pathways for when babies, children, young people, and families need support
- To build resilience in children, young people, and families living in Nottingham City

- To ensure Early Help offers support and provide information to the whole family when they need it, that is easily accessible so that they can meet their own needs
- To better join up and embed how all partners work to safeguard babies, children, and young people as part of a multi-disciplinary approach
- To gather feedback from parents/carers, children, and young people to continuously improve our Early Help offer

3. Priorities of the strategy

The partners identified five priorities to drive initial activity:

1. Embedding a whole system approach to facilitate Early Help being an integral part of a city-wide service
2. Partnership working
3. Partnership workforce development and structure
4. Measure the impact of Early Help
5. Pool funding and identify sustainability opportunities with the Family Hub and from external funding sources

4. Current progress against each priority

4.1 The Early Help Partnership Strategic Steering Group is now chaired by Karla Capstik, Programme Director (Small Steps Big Changes). The steering group has set-up four subgroups to address the priorities in the strategy:

- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)
- Family Voice
- Workforce Development
- Impact Monitoring

4.2 The development of fifth subgroup to manage the actions around sustainability is progressing.

Partnership priorities

4.3 **Priority 1** - Embedding a whole system approach to facilitate Early Help being an integral part of a city-wide service

- The partnership has agreed on practice guidance. Some small changes are being made before the document is distributed to the partnership.
- Arrangements for partners to have access to LL are nearly complete, testing dates are arranged.
- Through a language audit and primary school entry data 5 key languages in addition to English and British Sign Language have been identified to support access to services for families, Arabic, Urdu, Punjabi India, Romanian and Polish.
- The EDI subgroup is leading on standardised documentation and a shared language across the partnership and tracking progress against the Early Help Partnership Equality Impact Assessment. Easy read versions of the Partnership Strategy have been created and published with audio in English, Urdu, Arabic and Romanian.

4.4 **Priority 2** - Partnership working - Work on actions from priority 2 are well advanced.

- There is ongoing work with partners to ensure a collective 'Core Offer' of what Early Help Services are available to children, young people, and families.
- What is Early Help in English, Arabic, Urdu and Romanian have been created and distributed to Early Help contacts and Marketing and Communication leads at City Care, Police, Department of work and pensions, Small Steps Big Changes, Integrated Care Board and Change Grow Live. The promotion of services through AskLion, social media, partner organisations and the Early Help Partnership /Family Hubs website is ongoing. 27,800 Early Help Partnership Promotional postcards have been distributed to frontline workers and partners for onward distribution to children and families. A further 22,200 are committed and are due to be distributed by 13th March.
- An Early Help Partnership Marketing and Communications Strategy has been drafted and approved by Marketing and Communication leads from Partner organisations – it will next go to the Early Help Partnership Strategic Steering Group for approval.
- Since the launch of the Early Help Partnership website in October, 578 unique people have visited the website and spent on average 4minutes 30seconds on the site. We are currently in conversation with an external advertiser who can guarantee a minimum of 7500 interactions with the website in three months. This will be pending approval and agreeing a contract with them.

4.5 **Priority 3** - Partnership workforce development and structure

- The Early Help Partnership Strategic Steering Group and current subgroups (Workforce Development, Equality Diversity and Inclusion, Family Voice and Impact Monitoring are now functional and enabling the work on further alignment of services to enable ease of access for families
- Currently there is ongoing partnership work to develop partnership-wide workforce induction/ training/refresher package to ensure staff and system leaders are providing a consistent high-quality service.
- Shadowing opportunities to increase knowledge and understanding of partners' offer including peer support and mentoring
- Deliver six-monthly multi-agency partner and practitioner events to embed a collaborative approach. The first event maybe planned for end of June.

4.6 **Priority 4** – Measure the impact of Early Help

- A draft Quality Assurance Framework has been developed and approved by members of the Impact Monitoring Subgroup. This will go to the Early Help Partnership Steering Group for approval in April 2024.
- The Impact Monitoring subgroup members are in the process of agreeing Key Performance Indicators to propose to the Early Help Partnership Steering group and qualitative information that will be collected.
- Surveys have been developed to gather qualitative information which will be piloted with families before being used.
- Case studies are to support qualitative data

4.7 **Priority 5** - Pool funding and identify sustainability opportunities with the Family Hub and from external funding sources

- Currently a standing item on the Early Help Partnership Strategic Steering group. Volunteers are being sought from partners to join the Sustainability Subgroup who will lead on this priority. The work will include:
 - Identifying opportunities to pool resources for funding, training, and service delivery.
 - Work on a sustainability strategy for 2025, work on the Sustainability Strategy will start around October 2024
 - Actively apply for funding to increase Early Help services, and collaborate to maximise available funding streams and continue to collectively make the case for continued long-term investment in Early Help and prevention

5. Next Steps

- Recruitment to current grant funded vacancies (DfE/Small Steps Big Changes), which is required to support the ongoing work in Family Hubs and the wider Early Help area
- Further alignment of in-house Early Help services to support the wider Early Help system and CIS
- Agreement of key performance indicators and reporting framework with partners
- Confirmation of the sustainability subgroup

Appendix



APPENDIX 1
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