

TITLE OF REPORT: Early Help Service (Targeted Family Support)
Progress Update

REPORT OF: Strategic Director, Care Wellbeing and Learning

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

This report will provide a progress update on the activities and impact of the Early Help Service (Targeted Family Support) in providing advice, practical support intervention to vulnerable Gateshead families with dependent children. This follows a previous report to the Families OSC presented on 4th April 2019 which summarised the implementation phase of the service from October 2017 up to March 2019 when 2,615 children were referred (1,837 allocated for an intervention service) and caseloads correlated strongly with the 'Vulnerable' and 'Just Coping' population categories used by Thrive – 87% of the caseload residing in these areas.

Update – Early Help Caseloads

A total of 1,102 children have been referred since the April 2019 Families OSC meeting – 657 from the daily triage of police contacts. A total of 4,545 children have been referred for support since the inception of the new service in October 2017.

The current, live caseload held by Targeted Family Support is 698 children. After police triage (1,591), education (1,025), children's social care (1,006) and health (288) are the largest sources of referral to the service. Ward residence of families open for casework is highest in High Fell (13.3%), Windy Nook and Whitehills (8.0%) and Chopwell and Rowlands Gill (6.7%).

The casework model continues to use a combination of evidence-based interventions, advocacy and practical support for all family members.

New developments

The Reducing Parental Conflict (RPC) Programme offers four new pathways of support for families experiencing relationship distress. Gateshead acts as the 'Referral Gateway' for a group of 10 Local Authority areas and has generated a total of 218 referrals (figure correct at 14th October 2019) across the region since the June 2019 start date – the highest referral rate of the four national Contract

Package Areas piloting the new pathways. Gateshead hosted the Reducing Parental Conflict Conference for Senior Leaders on 11th September 2019 with over 100 delegates in attendance and has co-ordinated a comprehensive RPC training programme for practitioners working with families following receipt of a £25,100 grant from DWP.

The Team Around the School (TAS) model has been extended to include two further schools (Kingsmeadow and Heworth Grange) alongside Wickham as the original pilot site. A total of 130 children have received casework support through the TAS model with a strong focus on emotional and behavioural needs. The 'ROAR' approach – training for school staff to recognise and respond to emotional wellbeing issues among primary-age children – will be delivered from November 2019.

A new Enhanced Parenting Pathway (EPP) started this month (October 2019) to provide an integrated package of support from midwifery, health visiting, early help and children's centre services for new parents with known vulnerabilities. The EPP will provide early support to improve the physical and emotional health of families, promoting good, attachment-led parenting approaches through an intensive package of holistic support over 20 visits from 16-20 weeks gestation until the child is aged 24 months.

A wide range of evidence-based group programmes continue to be delivered for parents/carers of children of all ages. Use of school sites for delivery has increased in 2019, including (all primary) St Alban's, Larkspur, Lobley Hill, Caedmon and South Street. A total of 136 parents/carers have completed group programmes in 2019, while a further 58 have completed the developing 'Families First' pathway for parents/carers of children undergoing assessment (pre-diagnosis) for ADHD. Additional work has been done this month in ensuring that all parents/carers having a child confirmed with an ADHD diagnosis are immediately offered access to parenting support.

Impact

The service was Ofsted inspected between 29th April to 3rd May 2019 (report published 11th June 2019) and contributed to the overall effectiveness judgement of 'Good' for children's services within the Local Authority. The judgement on Early Help was summarised in the report (Para. 1) as follows:

Early help arrangements in Gateshead are a strength. There is a coherent multi-agency strategy which underpins the delivery of these services. Children and families are benefiting from a broad range of targeted family support delivered by well-trained, skilled staff. Partners are well engaged in the delivery of the early help offer, completing a high number of early help assessments. Pathways into targeted early intervention are clear and the threshold is appropriately applied. Higher risk cases are escalated swiftly to children's social care or are stepped-down when risks are reduced. Early help workers stay involved with their families when cases step up to statutory services. This means that children and families are benefiting from consistent support from a worker with whom they have established effective relationships. The service is making a positive difference to families and is reducing the number of children needing statutory help and support.

A total of 57.8% of families complete their support plan with the service with all known needs met or being managed within an alternative plan. Families continue to be tracked up to one year after closure to monitor any return to statutory services. Only 10.8% of families closed enter Tier 3 within one year of closure to Early Help, with 3.1% of that figure declining the service. Performance measures of this type are used to measure the sustainability of changes achieved with families.

Recommendation

It is requested that the Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- Considers the content of this update.

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