

TITLE OF REPORT: EARLY HELP PROGRESS UPDATE

REPORT OF: Caroline O'Neill, Strategic Director Care, Wellbeing and Learning

Purpose of Report

To provide an update on the progress of the Early Help Service (Targeted Family Support) in providing an effective and timely intervention service to vulnerable families within the borough.

Background

The Early Help Service (Targeted Family Support) was introduced in October 2017 to provide a (Tier 2) frontline family intervention service by bringing together a range of professional disciplines from across the children's workforce.

The service delivers direct intervention on parenting, children's behaviour, home conditions, managing low income, securing employment and finding the right help from other professionals.

Family needs are identified using the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and leads to a support plan being developed. The plan is reviewed every 6-8 weeks in a Team Around the Family (TAF) process. The service delivers a 'whole-family' approach and draws upon evidence-based strategies which are proven to improve the stability and wellbeing of families.

Since October 2017, the service has received referrals for 2615 children with 1837 of children being allocated for a family intervention service. Social work teams (755), Education (728), Police (489) and Health (240) are the largest referral agents for family intervention services. A total of 268 self-referrals have been received direct from families.

The current caseload of the service stands at 872 children.

A total of 57% of all case closures conclude with the family completing their support plan, while 11% see the family escalated for a (Tier 3) social work intervention where there is evidence of increased risk. The service continues to promote sustained change with families as only 6% of all case closures – and 3% of closures where the family have completed their support plan – are referred to Tier 3 services within 6 months of closure to Early Help.

An analysis of Early Help caseloads in November 2018 showed that 87% (973 children) on caseloads were in the 'Vulnerable and 'Just Coping' Thrive categories.

The service continues to develop new and innovative areas of practice, including:

- Gateshead leading a group of 10 regional Local Authorities in delivering the Reducing Parental Conflict Programme which will test up to £2.75M of new provision to help reduce the impact of parental conflict on children;
- A new 'Families First' pathway for parents of children undergoing assessment for ADHD and autism and building further on national recognition for ADHD work in 2016;
- Introducing the Team Around the School (TAS) model in January 2018 and extending this to two further schools from April 2019;
- Developing further the wide range of group parenting interventions available to families with children of all ages.

The Early Help Service continue to support and deliver training opportunities across the children's workforce (CAF, Level 3 Safeguarding, Domestic Abuse, Adolescent-Parent Violence & Abuse).

A refreshed Early Help Strategy (2018-2021) is placing a higher emphasis on Early Help as "everyone's business" to broaden the partnership responsibility for delivering timely and effective support to families in a range of contexts and settings.

Recommendations

1. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to:
 - Note and consider the content of this update.

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