

COMMUNITY WELLBEING PDG

7TH JUNE 2016

EARLY HELP SERVICES

Cabinet Member Cllr Colin Slade, Cabinet Member for Community Well Being
Responsible Officer Amy Tregellas, Head of Communities & Governance

Reason for Report: To update members on the latest developments with the Early Help Services (formerly the Troubled Families Programme).

RECOMMENDATION: That the PDG recommends the Working Practice Agreement for the sharing of information to support Early Help Provision (Appendix B) to the Cabinet for approval.

Relationship to Corporate Plan: The report relates to the Council's corporate objectives of 'Working with local communities to encourage them to support themselves' and 'Promoting physical activity, health and wellbeing' under the Community Wellbeing theme.

Financial Implications: None at this stage.

Legal Implications: The Council has a statutory duty to co-operate with other authorities to safeguard children under the Children's Act 2004

Risk Assessment: None

1.0 Background

1.1 The Troubled Families Programme was set up by Central Government in 2011 to 'turn around' the lives of 'the most troubled families' in Britain. The three-year funded programme was extended in 2014 for a further 2 years with the intention that the 'new approach' should be mainstreamed as part of the preventative services available to support children and families in need.

1.2 In Devon over the last two years, the Troubled Families Programme has evolved into 'Early Help'. Early Help describes a range of multi-agency support services offered to children, young people and families in response to their emerging needs. 'Early Help' aims to prevent the multiple and often complex needs of families escalating to a degree where they require more expensive specialist support or legal intervention. In this way the service has the dual objectives of protecting children and of reducing the costs of multiple interventions. Appendix 1 provides a more detailed description of this service.

1.3 The original Troubled Families Programme had very specific criteria for inclusion set by Central Government and concentrated on:

- getting children back in the classroom
- getting parents into work
- reducing crime and anti-social behavior

- 1.4 The Early Help programme is able to respond to a much broader range of needs of children and young people. It is based on front-line practitioners recognising when the needs of children and families reaches a threshold for intervention based on the cumulative effect of inter-related issues whether they are health, education, employment, or crime and disorder. Early Help services, therefore, form the essential preventative part of a continuum of help and support responding to the different levels of need of individual children and families.
- 1.5 One of the main objectives of the initial Troubled Families Programme was to try out new ways of working that would increase the integration and co-ordination of support to children and families in need. A key element of this was the locally-based multi-agency practitioner forums, at which the needs of families was discussed and support co-ordinated. There are three practitioner forums in the Mid Devon area covering Tiverton, Crediton and the Culm Valley which meet monthly, each managing a case load of between 10 -15 families at any one time. Under the Children's Act 2004, Mid Devon District Council has a duty to co-operate in initiatives to safeguard children, and supports Early Help mainly through the involvement of the Housing Service and Community Safety Officer in these practitioner forums. To this end the Council is being asked to sign up to the Working Practice Agreement for the sharing of information to support Early Help Provision (Appendix B).
- 1.6 In the first three years of the Troubled Families Programme the programme engaged with 150 families locally in the Mid Devon area. Up-to-date figures for the number of families involved in the programme will be circulated at the meeting.

2.0 Recent Changes

- 2.1 In order to reduce the overall cost of Early Help, the number of personnel involved in the programme has been gradually reduced. There is now just one Early Help Advisor and one Early Help Co-ordinator for the combined area of Mid & East Devon. At recent interviews in April, Russ Green was appointed as the new Early Help Co-ordinator for Mid and East Devon.
- 2.2 The structure and geography of the local management group is also being reviewed, and the Mid Devon management group may combine with East Devon to form one overall management group in line with the advisor and co-ordinator posts. After four years of supporting the programme locally the Community Development and Regeneration Manager has stepped down as chair of the local management group.

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Circulation of the Report: Cllr Colin Slade, Management Team

List of Background Papers:

Appendix A - 'Early Help in Practice' – a Guide for Professionals

Appendix B - Working Practice Agreement for the sharing of information to support Early Help Provision