

Proposals to improve Somerset's early help approach

January 2019

Following the public consultation on proposed changes to Somerset County Council's (SCC) support and services for children and families and having due regard to the updated Equalities Impact Assessment, the following proposals have been drawn up for consideration by key partners on the Early Help Commissioning Board and Children's Trust Board. The Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families Committee will also be asked for their comments before final proposals are recommended to Cabinet on the 11 February 2019.

There are 5 key areas of activity that if addressed simultaneously with the three Safeguarding Partners and other stakeholders across SCC, District Councils, NHS agencies in Somerset, schools and early years settings, the police, housing providers, and the charitable, voluntary and community sectors will develop and improve the early help offer in Somerset and will avoid any cliff-edge for families in the year-long implementation phase:

1. Improve the support and interventions for children with some additional needs – level 2
2. Strengthening Early Help Infrastructure with partners and redesigning the early help "Front Door"
3. Strengthening community capacity and capability
4. Improve the support and interventions for children with complex needs – level 3
5. Strengthen the multi-agency strategic approach to early help in Somerset

In detail the 5 programmes cover:

- 1. Support / intervention for children with some additional needs – level 2**
 - Retain getset level 2 team in its current form, for the implementation period until March 2020 (retaining £450k pa from troubled families grant which ends in March 2020) providing support to children with some additional needs at level 2 and their families by delivering group work and some key parenting programmes in areas identified as greatest need.
 - The team will move to providing group work and building resilient community settings, rather than individual case work, working alongside other key agencies that support 0-4 year olds eg health visitors and Early Years settings enabling more families to be supported.

- The team will provide some key parenting programmes and groups
- The team will deliver a “train the trainer” model for evidence based parenting programmes open to any community / voluntary group to enable them to identify and support more vulnerable families and run parenting programmes
- The team will align with the Public Health Nursing teams and be allocated across the 8 family hubs; they should act as community agents and help partners through training to identify and provide support for families so that partners can continue this once the getset level 2 service ends in March 2020.
- Continue to work with schools to develop the Team around the School model, ensuring it is fully embedded and reporting performance to assess impact. Consider feasibility to extend the model to cover ages 0-4 and 16+ ie wider remit than those of school age.

2. Strengthening Early Help Infrastructure with partners and redesigning the early help “Front Door”

- Empower parents/carers to be confident in utilising self-help methods to increase self reliance, in line with SCC’s digital strategy, by:
 - Signposting families via Somerset Choices and the local offer (see below)
 - Redesign and resourcing of Somerset Direct (SD) to be first point of contact for young people and families (based on adults model) providing advice and guidance in a more comprehensive way, only referring onto the Early Help (EH) Advice Hub if appropriate
- Remodel EH Advice Hub as one multi-agency support and triage point providing support and training for professionals and for families requiring more intensive telephone advice.
- Assess requirements for implementing the Early Help Case Management (EHM) portal and / or roll out EHM to a wider group of professionals across partners to support them in early help work with families. (The cost of portal implementation is approx. £124k one-off with £50k annual recurring costs)
- Undertake further development of the current Early Help Assessment (EHA) into a digital form enabling quicker and simplified process for all practitioners and assessments that make sense to families.

3. Strengthening community capacity and capability / market development

- Establish an annual £200k commissioning / grant fund (which could be increased with other partners financial contribution eg CCG, district councils):
 - Initially focused on mitigating gaps identified by cessation of getset level 2 for example investing in parenting programmes, and consideration to establish a children’s offer within community connect and community catalysts, developing and enhancing the current Adult’s model into a holistic family model that can better support children within their localities (based on successful implementation and learning from Adults commissioners)

- This fund will be facilitated by SCC with application/tender panels drawn from the multi-agency Early Help Commissioning and Area Advisory Boards to seed fund support at level 2 and 3 of need.
- Develop stronger, collaborative relationships with district councils working in partnership to develop and deliver a community development offer.
- Collaborate with partners and larger voluntary and community sector provision eg Homestart, Safe Families, Yeovil4Families, YMCA etc to identify further opportunities
- Strengthen the multi-agency Early Help Area Advisory Boards in each district council area to understand local needs, undertake local audit of provision and identifying gaps and prioritising early help action in their areas. This will allow integration with the emerging Neighbourhood model.
- Utilise Somerset Choices and the SEND Local Offer as key resource of information, advice and guidance to families by ensuring community groups, support and activities are widely publicised, thereby supporting individuals to help themselves and promote independence.

4. Support / intervention with children with complex needs – level 3

- Remodel and integrate children’s services level 3 services in line with Peopletoo recommendations.
- Retain a separate Children with Disabilities level 2 and 3 team and explore integration with the and explore integration arrangements with SEND and the NHS to provide a coherent offer neighbourhood offer.
- Remodel the Education Welfare Service to support the schools funded L2 service
- Through the Reducing Parental Conflict Programme, funded by DWP, Somerset will be testing models of face to face support to families starting in April 2019 at no cost; £38k additional grant has been secured to provide additional support
- Provide parenting work with families of young offenders utilising a £70k YJB grant in 2019/20 (following £40k 18/19)
- Test a business case to implement the national model of Pause in Somerset - a programme of support to vulnerable mothers who have, or are at risk of, repeat removals of children being taken into care.

5. Improve multi-agency strategic approach to early help

- Strengthen multi-agency EH Strategic Commissioning Board including revised membership to focus on:
 - Clear vision and communications and marketing to promote and engender support for early help in Somerset
 - Refresh and implementation of the EH strategy, offer and approach across Somerset
 - Measuring impact and effectiveness of EH across the “system”
 - Holding partners to account
 - Two way link with each of the EH Area Advisory Boards
 - Stronger voice of families and an ambition to co-produce.

- Greater presence from the community and voluntary sector
- Continue to embed Troubled Families (TF) approach and strategic outcomes across partners
- Improved information sharing and continued development and use of the TF data warehouse to provide intelligence on need and allow targeting of resources
- Continued development and awareness raising of early help “tools” ie Early Help Assessment, portal/access to EHCM, professional choices, effective support guidance
- Continue to train and develop the early help workforce

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