

## Early Help Board - Update

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### 1. Overview

- 1.1 Cabinet agreed in January 2019 to strengthen the multi-agency strategic approach to early help in Somerset as part of the overall Early Help Strategy. This included commitment to developing the Early Help Strategic Commissioning Board to provide strengthened strategic oversight.
- 1.2 The purpose of the Early Help Strategic Commissioning Board is to provide overall direction and leadership to the delivery of early help priorities and the priorities of the Children and Young People's Plan 2019-22 from a range of partners across Somerset. Four Area Advisory Boards report to the Board. The priorities of the Board are:
  - Developing Partners as lead practitioners
  - Creating a shared language so that all partners can communicate around a common vision, common values and increasing trust across partners
  - Evaluating the impact of partnership and community engagement so we can understand costs and benefits in cash terms
  - Harnessing power of communities who are assets within the delivery of early help
  - Listen to, take account of and feed into the Board the views of children and young people and their families

### 2. Membership

The table below shows which organisations are represented on the Board.

<b>Organisation</b>
Somerset County Council
Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group
Avon and Somerset Police
Department for Work and Pensions
Somerset District Councils
Taunton and Somerset NHS Foundation Trust
Housing Sector
Parent/Carer Representative
Chairs of 4 Area Advisory Boards
Voluntary & Community Sector

### 3. Achievements

- 3.1 Collaboration Event on 5 July 2019 – over 100 people attended the event from across the early help community, sharing challenges from key agencies such as police, education, local authority and health. 11 different early help delivery

models were shared with attendees to raise awareness and strengthen further collaboration. High level summary of actions agreed:

- Blending Team Around the School (TAS) and One Team / Together Team meetings
  - Creating action groups aimed at doing rather than meeting
  - Asking the community to co-produce services
  - Becoming more solutions focussed / asset based
  - Celebrating success
  - Working with colleges to introduce a safeguarding/ early help session across a number of courses such as beauty, hairdressing to spot early signs of domestic abuse
  - Working intergenerationally and bringing adult and children's services together
- 3.2 Re-launch of early help assessment (EHA), shortened from 13 to 6 pages as a response to feedback from practitioners. Supporting guidance refreshed. Launch in September 2019 will include e-learning to support practitioners.
- 3.3 County Lines – Ensured communication and a coherent approach between the five county lines pilots and Early Help leaders. Sedgemoor District Council is one of 5 Home Office Pilots on tackling County Lines and the only non-police and rural pilot. This means a more nuanced approach for this community reflecting the context within which county lines happens. The Nelson Trust in Bridgwater has a dedicated worker for women caught up in County Lines with a crèche attached.
- 3.4 Work is underway via the Church of England Clewer Initiative on Modern Slavery and child exploitation, reaching people that professionals may struggle to engage.
- 3.5 Somerset Activity & Sports Partnership (SASP) is looking at an initiative focussed on organised crime and children in need who are at risk of exclusion and engaged in low level anti-social behaviour
- 3.6 Hamp Academy has hosted agency restorative practice training funded by the Home Office, bringing together teachers, community and voluntary organisations and housing to explore tackling problematic behaviours at an early stage.
- 3.7 An approach to parenting support (including parenting programmes) has been agreed across the partnership.
- 3.8 Communications strategy agreed to raise awareness of Early Help with both the public and the early help workforce.

#### **4 CHALLENGES**

- 4.1 Early Help is a process made up of small acts of leadership carried out by individuals every day. Collating and celebrating the many times when things go right is a challenge. Ensuring this is reflected within evaluations is necessary to understand the effectiveness of early help.
- 4.2 Identifying skills and adaptations in early help to address serious organised crime, modern slavery and county lines activity across the County can be problematic.
- 4.3 The Board regularly hears from a wide range of agencies about increasing complexity of need presenting at schools and communities. Ensuring the correct training and mentoring for staff is available is not always possible.

- 4.4 Data capture and analysis continues to be difficult. There is a real need for a system which is easy to use and access but able to deal with the complexity of organisations accessing it and of the outcomes and outputs being achieved.
- 4.5 Reduced numbers of professionals are available for Early Help Advisory boards due to pressures within their 'home' agencies, making them less effective. Solutions are being considered.
- 4.6 Understanding Elective Home education and how agencies can respond effectively and early is a challenge. The Education Safeguarding Service are attending the Board to make partners aware of what can be done and how to access support.
- 4.7 Supporting and leading work with families living within the context of frozen, reducing and changing welfare benefits.
- 4.8 Increasing focus on delivering statutory responsibilities by all agencies that support families can mean that Early Help is not always a priority.

## **5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ASSISTANCE**

- 5.1 'We are all early help' reflects the clear vision the County has for its children, young people and their families. The Early Help Board is developing a communication plan reinforcing that early help is a way of working together not a discrete service.
- 5.2 To support development of a data platform to drive early intervention and decision making across a range of agencies.
- 5.3 To support District Councils to integrate early help into their work so they shape early help in a way which meets local needs and contexts.
- 5.4 To support work to ensure that schools and colleges are closely involved with early help to ensure that children and young people are not removed from school because of a lack of access to appropriate early help.
- 5.5 To ensure enough time and opportunities are available for early help leaders across Somerset to regularly meet to share best practice and to continue to develop early help.

## **6 NEXT STEPS**

- 6.1 To re-launch tools to support the early help process. This will include the EHA and revised thresholds guidance. A one-month communications campaign has been agreed and will start in September 2019 to reinforce 'We are all early help'. Its impact will be reviewed in October.
- 6.2 Recent Serious Case Reviews have focussed on the importance of early help across all sectors and agencies - the learning will be widely disseminated.
- 6.3 Creation of collaborative processes and opportunities to encourage all partners and agencies to respond together to make Early help a priority.
- 6.4 Influence the creation of advice and assistance to agencies wanting to increase their skills and capacity
- 6.5 Continue to make links between services and facilitating conversations
- 6.6 Influencing the routine and comprehensive use of the Early Help Assessment tool
- 6.7 Improve data sharing and data analysis to offer a robust evaluation of Early Help across Somerset.