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# Early Intervention and Family Help

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<b>Committee considering report:</b>	Scrutiny Commission
<b>Date of Committee:</b>	26 November 2024
<b>Portfolio Member:</b>	Councillor Heather Codling
<b>Date Portfolio Member agreed report:</b>	14 November 2024
<b>Report Author:</b>	Karen Atalla
<b>Forward Plan Ref:</b>	N/A

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## 1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To provide an overview of the Early Intervention and Family Help & Achievement Model and its impact on meeting the needs of families earlier and decreasing the need for costly long-term statutory involvement with children and their families.
- 1.2 To highlight the benefits of early intervention, the work of our Early Response Hub (ERH) and collaborative working for children, their families, and the organisation.
- 1.3 The Department for Education’s (DfE) revised version of Working Together to Safeguard Children published in 2023 has removed the previous requirement for child in need assessments and casework to be reserved for qualified social workers.
- 1.4 This report will outline West Berkshire’s approach to managing any associated risks by merging targeted early help and child in need provision.

## 2. Recommendation(s)

This report is to support Scrutiny Commission to have oversight around our Early Help Service.

## 3. Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
<b>Financial:</b>	There are no financial implications
<b>Human Resource:</b>	There are no HR implications

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<b>Legal:</b>	There are no legal implications			
<b>Risk Management:</b>	This practice model increases risk awareness which enables a higher proportion of our cohort of 'children in need' to be supported by intervention workers/support staff across agencies bringing greater availability and access to collective resources.			
<b>Property:</b>	NA			
<b>Policy:</b>	N/A			
	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Commentary</b>
<b>Equalities Impact:</b>				
<b>A</b> Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?	x			Positive Impact as the model promotes equality by ensuring children and families receive a service appropriate to the level of identified need from the right person to the right place at the right time.
<b>B</b> Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		x		
<b>Environmental Impact:</b>		x		

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<b>Health Impact:</b>	x			Intervening at an earlier stage has the potential to reduce levels of vulnerability in families and support them to develop strategies and strengths to prevent situations and challenges escalating. In turn bringing a positive impact to physical and mental health.
<b>ICT Impact:</b>		x		
<b>Digital Services Impact:</b>		x		
<b>Council Strategy Priorities:</b>	x			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure our vulnerable children and adults achieve better outcomes</li> <li>• Help people to help themselves and others</li> <li>• Improve the health and wellbeing of our resident through appropriate interventions</li> <li>• Support everyone to reach their full potential <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Help people to help themselves and others</li> <li>○ Improve the health and wellbeing of our resident through appropriate interventions</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Ensure sustainable services through innovation and partnership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Expand our work with partner organisation and communities to improve service for local residents.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Core Business:</b>	x			The Family Help & Achievement Model has shown positive impacts through early intervention and collaborative planning. Ongoing challenges such as resource limitations and complex needs require continuous effort and innovation to ensure sustainable positive outcomes. The Family Help & Achievement Model is key to achieving our aim of keeping more families together and avoiding the cost of statutory and higher-level interventions.

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<b>Data Impact:</b>	x			As we collate richer data and feedback both quantitative and qualitative data can be refined and analysed to evidence the effectiveness of enhanced collaboration - to involve all partners, schools, the community, and voluntary agencies. Additional 'buy in' and sharing of resources can lead to cost effective improved outcomes for children and families.
<b>Consultation and Engagement:</b>	<p>Partner agencies co located and virtual within CAAS and ERH have been consulted and are engaged in the model.</p> <p>Feedback from families and professionals relating to how we can improve service delivery, has been incorporated.</p>			

## 4. Executive Summary

- 4.1 This report accompanies the slide deck to offer an overview of Early Intervention within the Council.
- 4.2 The Early Response Hub (ERH) launched in November 2019 and continues to be focused on prevention and intervention, ensuring families get the right help, at the right time, from the person or service.
- 4.3 The ERH provides support and intervention to families at the point they need it, with the aim of preventing escalation.
- 4.4 There is evidence from the Early Intervention Foundation that avoiding statutory intervention and intervention earlier has better outcomes for children and can also represent a cost saving for the local authority. See Appendix 2
- 4.5 Whilst there are budgetary constraints, the ERH continues to adapt to support family's needs and manage risks.
- 4.6 As a service they are consistently reviewing data, feedback and ensuring the services that are in place deliver, although demand remains a worry.

## 5. Supporting Information

### Introduction

Early Response Hub (ERH).

- 5.1 ERH sits within the Children's Services front door and has 8 different elements of responsibility.

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5.2 Each area has a focus on Intervention and Prevention.

- 5.2.1 ERH Triage (responding to families within three days or five days with a home visit) – these are families who typically require a single agency referral to a community service and referrals are made by the ERH Triage with the family's agreement, to break down barriers to services.
- 5.2.2 ERH Assessment (completing Family First level2b assessments) non statutory assessments completed over a maximum of 25 working days and can act as a foundation to a statutory s17 single assessment if level 3 concerns are identified during the assessment.
- 5.2.3 ERH Intervention on families in receipt of statutory intervention (six weeks of intervention focused on a particular worry or issue) – as part of the Family Help and Achievement Model, families may require secondary allocation to an Intervention Worker, to work alongside the social worker with the family, on a bespoke intensive plan of intervention, to reduce the worries and concerns.
- 5.2.4 Young Carers – identifying, assessment and supporting young carers in West Berkshire via assessments, reassessments and respite activities.
- 5.2.5 Reducing Parental Conflict (for co-parenting parents and training for professionals) – delivering reducing parental conflict training for separated parents to enable them to co-parent more effectively and delivering training to professionals to help them to understand the difference between parental conflict and domestic abuse.
- 5.2.6 My Family Plan consultation service - the My Family Plan facilitators provide a consultation and advice service to lead professionals in My Family Plans which are a community led support plan.
- 5.2.7 Family Group Conferences (and Restorative Conferences) – the opportunity for a family to come together to identify a family plan to respond to the worries or concerns for children and families.
- 5.2.8 Family Help and Achievement Model – a new model of responding to families across the spectrum of need.

5.3 The Family Help and Achievement Model focuses on:

- **Prevention:** Early identification and intervention to prevent escalation of issues.
- **Intervention:** Tailored support based on the spectrum of need, from universal services to complex and severe needs.
- **Collaboration:** Working with families, communities, and professionals to co-create and solutions. Enhanced methods of collaborative working can deliver improved outcomes for children and their families.
- **Earlier Support:** Providing help at the earliest point to avoid crisis situations.

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- 5.4 This paper draws attention to the importance of:
- **Investment in Early Help:** Emphasising the importance of investing in early help and prevention to achieve our aim of keeping more families together and avoiding the cost of statutory and higher-level interventions.
  - **Enhanced Collaboration and Commitment:** Highlighting the importance of strong relationships and commitment within the community, schools, partner agencies – statutory and voluntary.
- 5.5 We take responsibility for what is right for children, but also for West Berkshire and the organisation with an inclusive approach to decision making and shared accountability which assists with the identification of the most appropriate person to safely work with the child and family in need of help and support.
- 5.6 This approach leads to earlier identification of need utilising the model's multi-agency Family Achievement Meetings or Group Supervision and improves cross agency understanding of operational roles.
- 5.7 The organic development of this model and its innovative approach to managing demand through earlier help and intervention, was fast-tracked and ratified with the publication of Stable Homes Built on Love (SHBOL) and the subsequent amendments to Working Together 2023.
- 5.8 This report is intended to provide an update to Board on the development and progress of the Family Help and Achievement Model and its incorporation of the CIN Pilot.
- 5.9 Locally and nationally, it is recognised that a new way of working is required to manage the volume of work into Children's Services that includes Improved partnership working arrangements and shifting accountabilities for the oversight and support of Children in Need.
- 5.10 Providing referring agencies with higher levels of accountability and ownership, each stage of our Early Help progression has enabled the vision that has been introduced as a practice model that aligns with revised Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023, and SHBOL.

## Background

- 5.11 The new model of practice is intended to enhance the current process, encouraging collaborative practice to bring '**The Right Person, to the Right Place at the Right Time**', safely utilising the use of non-qualified social work staff for a proportion of Child in Need (CIN) work.
- 5.12 This development will enhance the capability for the earlier identification of children in need bringing opportunity leading to access to advice and/or services that will prevent future escalation and remove the need for longer-term statutory intervention.

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- 5.13 This progressive way of working will support West Berkshire's Children and Family Services in maintaining current staffing levels whilst addressing significantly increased complexity and demand for services seen locally and nationally.
- 5.14 To further develop our model of working moving on to future phases that incorporate innovative and smart use of resource streamlining council and community resources:
- 5.15 **Phase 1. Nov 2019 – 2021 complete.**
- 5.16 The Early Response Hub (ERH) was created and subsequently launched. Initially created as part of CAAS Triage in order to increase effectiveness in responding to non-statutory concerns and helping to reduce the previously high rate of repeat contacts.
- 5.17 **Phase 2. April 2023- 2024 complete.**
- 5.18 ERH formally merged with the Targeted Intervention Service and launched this new way of working alongside the Family First Assessment; a non-statutory 25 working day assessment which can, if required, provide the foundation for a statutory Single Assessment should the level of need require this. The purpose of the Family First Assessment was to reduce the numbers of Single Assessments concluding in no further action – right support, at the right time, by the right person.
- 5.19 **Phase 3. August - November 2024;**
- 5.20 The CIN pilot moved from the management of Family Safeguarding West team to the CAAS/ERH management. The CIN pilot is an 18-month pilot to test the use of alternatively qualified practitioners taking the role of Lead Practitioner as an alternative for those children that would previously have required social work input.
- 5.21 Incorporating the CIN Pilot into the Family Help and Achievement model of practice to bring assurance that the complexity of children and families is managed safely within a model that reduces but does not exclude social workers continuing to progress 'elements' of complex child in need work.
- 5.22 **Phase 4. November – ongoing**
- 5.23 Incorporate community-based family hubs into early help and develop an offer of support that has a wider reach across communities and incorporates partner agency services under one roof.
- Utilise current resource smartly and work with partners and agencies at all levels to explore and enhance the cost benefits associated with early help for everyone to increase resource and 'buy in'.
  - Attend partner agency forums to promote this early help and intervention and provide opportunities for partnership development, collaboration, and innovation to continually expand our ability to reduce need and risk.

### 5.24 Family Hubs remain central to Early Intervention

Family hubs remain central to early intervention for several key reasons:

- **Integrated Support:** Family hubs can be utilised to provide a single access point to a range of integrated community support services. This includes help with social, emotional, physical, and financial needs, making it easier for families to get the support they need without navigating multiple systems.
- **Early Identification:** If offering access to services within the community, family hubs can identify needs early and provide coordinated support before problems become complex. This early intervention can prevent issues from escalating and reduce the need for more intensive services later.
- **Community-Centric:** Each family hub can be tailored to its local community, ensuring that the services provided are relevant and accessible. This bespoke approach helps to build trust and engagement within the community.
- **Strengthening Relationships:** Family hubs prioritise building strong, trusting relationships with families. This relational approach ensures that families feel supported and understood, which is crucial for effective early intervention.
- **Value:** By co-locating services and promoting data sharing and collaborative working family hubs can make support visible and accessible with families only needing to tell their story once, to receive the right service at the right time from the right person to the right place.

## Proposals

- 5.26 This report is to support Scrutiny Commission to have oversight around our Early Help Service

## 6 Other options considered

The other option would be to continue as we are which is not sustainable due to current demand. An enhancement to our current offer is required in line with SHBOL and Working Together.

## 7 Conclusion

- 7.1 Engaging the community and existing resource whilst building strong support networks will enhance the effectiveness of early help and support can be delivered in the right place for children and families.
- 7.2 This broader integrated approach requires the support of senior officers and the executive to support and promote partnerships and collaboration across West Berkshire.



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- 7.3 This practice model increases risk awareness which enables a higher proportion of our cohort of 'children in need' to be supported by intervention workers / support staff across agencies bringing greater availability and access to collective resources.
- 7.4 Operating in this manner allows us to manage risks associated with children in need differently but safely. By integrating early help and child in need provision, we can provide timely and appropriate support, preventing issues from escalating into crises that require more intensive and costly interventions.
- 7.5 This model aligns with national standards and reforms and is a West Berkshire concept that has been developed in phases that has evidenced its effectiveness. Having read the landscape and developed this model, we have positioned West Berkshire as a leader in responding to SHBOL and improving outcomes for children and families.

## 8 Appendices

Appendix A - Slide Deck

Appendix B - EIF Cost of Late Interventions

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### Background Papers:

None

### Subject to Call-In:

Yes:  No:

- The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval
- Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council
- Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position
- Considered or reviewed by Scrutiny Commission or associated Committees, Task Groups within preceding six months
- Item is Urgent Key Decision
- Report is to note only

**Wards affected:** All wards

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## Early Intervention and Family Help

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