

For General Release

REPORT TO:	CABINET 24 September 2018
SUBJECT:	Update report on the development of Croydon's Partnership Early Help Strategy
LEAD OFFICER:	Executive Director Children's Services, Eleni Ioannides Interim Head of Early Help, Carolann James
CABINET MEMBER:	Councillor Alisa Flemming, Cabinet Member for Children Young People and Learning
WARDS:	ALL
CORPORATE PRIORITY/POLICY CONTEXT/ AMBITIOUS FOR CROYDON <p>Croydon's vision is that "<i>all children and young people in Croydon will be safe, healthy and happy, and will aspire to be the best they can be. The future is theirs</i>" as identified in the Council's Corporate Plan priorities: Corporate Plan 2015-18 and Croydon's Children's Services Improvement plan as approved by Cabinet in November 2017 which identified the following priorities:</p> <p>Practice, Priority 2: Improve the quality of practice for children who need help and protection.</p> <p>People & Performance, Priority 9: Recommission new services as part of the Early Help Strategy</p> <p>Partnerships, Priority 10: Improve Croydon's Safeguarding Children Board and strengthen partnership working – including partnership engagement in early help</p> <p>The development of Croydon's Partnership Early Help Strategy and delivery plan addressing the priorities as described above.</p>	
FINANCIAL IMPACT <p>There are no direct financial implications arising from this report, financial efficiencies are anticipated once the strategy is actually implemented.</p>	
FORWARD PLAN KEY DECISION REFERENCE NO. <p>Not a key decision – information only</p>	

The Leader of the Council has delegated to the Cabinet the power to make the decisions set out in the recommendations below:

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cabinet is recommended to:

- 1.1 Note the progress made in development of Croydon's Partnership Early Help Strategy and proposed plan for implementation.
- 1.2 Endorse the Final Draft of the Partnership Early Help Strategy which will be considered for finalisation and agreement at the Croydon Safeguarding Children Board in September 2018.

2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2.1 This report is provided to Cabinet to inform on the progress made in relation to development of the Croydon Partnership Early Help Strategy. This follows Ofsted's Single Inspection Framework (SIF) in the summer of 2017 where we received an inadequate grading, the development of Council's Improvement Plan for Children's services agreed by Cabinet in November 2017 and the DfE Commissioner's report to DfE in December 2017. At the most recent (July 2018) Ofsted monitoring visit Ofsted found that "the pace of change since the inspection in September 2017 has been too slow. The newly appointed director of children's services and senior managers are in the process of refreshing the improvement plan so that priority areas are tackled with increased vigour".

2.2 In relation to Early Help Ofsted's SIF found that:

- The range and coordination of early help provision for children and families are not fully established. Individual partner agencies are unclear about the early help offer and have not been involved in developing a shared approach to delivering services. (p.3)
- The range and coordination of early help provision for children and families are underdeveloped. However, partner agencies are at the early stages of working together to develop a new, shared approach to delivering services. (p.10 summary)
- The range and coordination of early help provision for children and families are underdeveloped. Partner agencies remain unclear about the purpose of the early help offer. However, they are at the early stages of working together to develop a new approach, building on the Best Start Programme, which is helping to further develop a shared approach to delivering services. The early help hub facilitates access to services and supports professionals in completing early help assessments. However, there is an insufficient range of evidence-based interventions to support families. The evaluation of work is not taking place, which means that it is

difficult to measure impact or demonstrate that the work is sustainable
(p10 section 26)

- The early help screening and assessment process builds delay in decision-making processes and operates separately from children's social care systems. Non social work staff can hold cases for several days without the early help screening team making a decision. For example, some cases wait too long before being allocated for a social work assessment. (p10 section 27)
- The early help strategy is insufficiently coordinated and implemented and the board has not ensured that pathways to early help services are well understood and applied. Ineffective action to address this fundamental deficit means that the board cannot be assured that children are receiving the right level of help at the right time. (p33 summary)

Ofsted recommended that we:

- Strengthen the provision of early help support for children and families and ensure that partner agencies have a shared understanding of the early help strategy and associated thresholds.

(Recommendation 11 p. 8)

- 2.3 Our ambition for children is that **all children and young people in Croydon will be safe, healthy and happy, and will aspire to be the best they can be. The future is theirs.**
- 2.4 In Croydon we believe that every child should have the opportunity to reach their full potential. We believe that children should grow and achieve within their own families when it is in their best interests and it is safe for them to do so. By working together, we will develop flexible services which are responsive to children and families' needs.
- 2.5 Croydon is establishing a vision for the future that will provide for:
- A system wide approach, with joint pooled resources and pathways operating across organisational boundaries
 - An outcome focussed approach delivering long term sustainable solutions for individuals and families to secure resilience and independence
 - A shift from acute provision to an increase in prevention and early help activity
 - Evidence based services that are built around customer need
 - Locality based delivery where appropriate
- 2.6 Early help is *everyone's responsibility*; we want children, families, communities and agencies to work together so that families are assisted to help themselves and are supported as soon as a need arises, thereby improving the wellbeing and life chances for Croydon's children and young people.

2.7 We will together:

- Understand those families where children may be at risk of not reaching their full potential and share concerns
- Build a relationship with the family as early as possible, and work with them to create a family environment that provides children with the best life chances and prevent problems from arising or escalating
- Reduce the number of children and their families requiring support from specialist services.

2.8 Problems may emerge at any point from conception, through childhood and adolescence to adulthood. Effective Early Help, “Right help, Right time” is provided to prevent or reduce the need for statutory or specialist interventions, wherever possible and safe to do so, resolve the problem and prevent it becoming entrenched and build resilience in children and their families.

2.9 Croydon’s Partnership Draft Early Help Strategy (Appendix A) and delivery plan has been developed across the partnership, and will align with Croydon’s vision for the new operating model enabling us to provide a joined up, effective early help offer for children aged 0 to 18 years and their families; which is delivered on a locality, multi-agency evidence based model through a shared partnership approach to delivering universal and early help services. The Strategy will be implemented, once agreed by Croydon Safeguarding Children Board, in a phased approach.

2.10 The Early Help delivery model is shaped around three Early Help locality hubs, working initially within the three localities established through the Best Start early help provision, in the north, central and south areas of the Borough. These three hubs provide a locality base for bringing together a range of practitioners supporting close collaboration and alignment of services to form our realigned Council early help family key work teams, ‘Family Solutions’, who will work with partners across the locality to collectively delivering an integrated approach to our early help offer.

2.11 In the north of the Borough Early Help Services will form part of the new Gateway Hub in Thornton Heath which will have its focus on children, young people and families.

2.12 The role of the Early Help hubs is to bring different services and agencies to work collectively to address local need and to provide a more coordinated and collaborative response to supporting children and families across Croydon. Professionals across the locality areas will be effectively identifying children and their families with problems, working out with the family what help is needed and bringing together and aligning different services to support the child and their family in a coordinated way.

2.13 Within the localities the practitioners collectively delivering early help across all partner agencies will have regular locality meetings and locality network events as part of the collaborative approach to delivering early help to provide help and support for practitioners and agencies working with children, young people and their families, in addition to providing opportunities to share good

practice; develop understanding and shape the future of the early help offer to support families across the locality. The localities' delivery networks help to facilitate a much stronger approach and collaboration and integration across universal and targeted services including schools, GPs and other health services, the police, voluntary and community sector agencies and a wide range of Council services such as children centres, youth services, housing and community support services and children's social care.

- 2.14 It is anticipated that this change programme will be delivered from within existing service budgets. If there are additional costs arising from service transformation then funding from the transformation fund can be made available.
- 2.15 Croydon's Partnership Early Help Strategy is a shared partnership approach to collective delivery of the universal and early help offer and partners will be expected to contribute to funding the offer going forward.

3. Partnership Early Help Strategy

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 In July 2018, the Government published revised statutory guidance [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#): a guidance to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

Working Together sets out the legal requirements that health professionals, social workers, police, education professionals and others working with children must follow. The guidance emphasises that effective support and safeguarding for children and young people is the responsibility of all professionals working with children and young people and provides advice in support to Sections 10 and 11 of the Children Act 2014 where the primary duties for all agencies are set out.

- 3.1.2 Croydon is one of the largest London boroughs with a population of nearly 100,000 children under 18 years with the largest population (38,000) of young people aged 10 to 17 years of all the London Borough's. Approximately 23% of children in the Borough are living in low income families. Children from minority ethnic groups account for 58% of all children living in the area, compared to 21% in the country as a whole.
- 3.1.3 We believe that children should grow and achieve within their own families when it is in their best interests and is safe for them to do so.
- 3.1.4 The majority of children and families are strong and resilient and have good networks and resources to meet their needs. However, some families will experience difficulties from time to time. Early help means taking action to support a child, young person or their family early in the life of a problem, as soon as it emerges. It can be required at any stage in a child's life from pre-

birth through to adulthood and applies to any problem or need that the family cannot deal with or meet on their own.

3.1.5 Recent influential studies and reports ¹ show that providing early and effective support to families early can prevent complex problems emerging and enable children and adults to reach their full potential.

3.1.6 Partners and communities want a simple clear description about needs, thresholds and how families can access a range of services. This will enable them to improve the wellbeing of children and quickly offer the support needed. By working together, we will develop services which are flexible and responsive to children and families' needs. Our Partnership Early Help strategy sets out the early help offer and everyone's role and responsibilities in responding effectively to needs and managing risk in order to improve outcomes for children and families of Croydon.

3.2 Croydon's ambition for children

3.2.1 Our ambition for children is that **all children and young people in Croydon will be safe, healthy and happy, and will aspire to be the best they can be. The future is theirs.**

3.3 Guiding Principles for our Partnership Early Help Strategy

3.3.1 Our early help approach is based on a set of shared principles:

- Early help is everyone's responsibility.
- Wherever possible all children and families' needs will be met by universal services.
- Listen to children and families and treat them as partners.
- Our priority and focus is always the child – understanding their needs and ensuring their welfare.
- All services that work with children and adults must work together to deliver early help.
- Early help resources will be deployed through a locality model based on an understanding of the needs of children, young people and their families.
- Ensure clear pathways to support.

3.4 Our priorities for early help and prevention

3.4.1 Croydon's ambition is to move towards a new operating model focusing on prevention and early help. Over recent years Croydon has reviewed and adapted its early help and prevention strategy but the impact of these revised strategies has not been as far reaching as would have been hoped for and has not reduced demand on statutory and specialist services. Our children's

¹ Early Intervention: the next steps and Early Intervention: Smart Investment, Massive Savings (Graham Allen MP (2011), Foundation Years: Independent Review on Poverty (Frank Field MP Dec 2010, Munro Review of Child Protection, Final Report (Professor Eileen Munro, 2011), The Early Years: Foundations for life, health and learning (Dame Clare Tickell, 2010), Fair Society, Healthy Lives (Sir Michael Marmot, 2010)

improvement plan commits to delivering an effective all age Partnership Early Help Offer, ensuring consistent application of thresholds and a more effective whole family systemic locality based partnership approach to early help.

- 3.4.2 Analysis undertaken through a number of different forums and reviews, including thematic reviews undertaken by the Croydon Safeguarding Children Board, completed over recent times along with the contributions of partners participating in the development of our Partnership Early Help Strategy identifies key factors that can increase vulnerability and lead to poor outcomes for children and families in Croydon.
- 3.4.3 Our early help priorities in the first two years to support the reduction in demand and impact on statutory services will be to prevent escalation, where safe to do so, to statutory and specialist services and to enable step down from statutory and specialist services to Early Help with a focus on working with families where the predominant issues present in statutory services are present.
- 3.4.4 Resilient families will be achieved by a partnership response to whole system re-design of support to children, young people and families, across the whole continuum of need from pre-birth through to 18, using a locality, consistent, evidenced based approach to effectively build family and community resilience in Croydon, focusing on early help and maximising the life chances for children and young people. This approach will shift the balance of service delivery towards earlier help and prevention, therefore improving outcomes for families, reducing demand on high cost statutory services and maximising the effective use of all available partnership resources.

3.5 Our Early Help approach

- 3.5.1 Effective support through the 'Right help, Right time' framework describes the relationship between four levels of need; **universal, additional, intensive and specialist need.**
- 3.5.2 Effective understanding and application of these levels will ensure children and their families receive help early in the life of the problem. Practitioners should take an open and honest approach to supporting children and families. Professionals should always seek a family's consent to share information to enable them to access the right support, unless to do so a child would be at risk of significant harm.
- 3.5.3 The effective support Right Help, Right Time framework for guidance for practitioners (Appendix C) describes more details about the four levels of need and application of need and aims to achieve consistency in understanding and practice, when responding to children young people and their families who need extra support.
- 3.5.4 This guidance is in draft at present and through the multi-agency Croydon Safeguarding Children Board Task and Finish group will be finalised and

presented to the Croydon Safeguarding Children Board in September 2018 for agreement and will then be implemented.

- 3.5.5 Reaching decisions about levels of need and the best intervention requires discussion, reflection and professional judgement. All professionals should work together to provide support to families at the lowest level possible according to their needs, but also be ready to respond if there is an escalation in the child's needs.
- 3.5.6 An effective early help offer along the continuum of need, involving a robust range of interventions to support families to meet additional needs, will ensure need is appropriately met and reduce the need for costly reactive services.
- 3.5.7 In Croydon we will continue to develop and embed a locality based whole family approach across all children and adult services. This approach recognises how problems that adults and children experience, for example mental ill health, substance misuse, domestic abuse can impact on the whole family and highlights the contribution that all agencies can make in ensuring services are provided to support sustainable improved outcomes and life chances.
- 3.5.8 We will, with our partners, develop our prevention and support services/interventions within the universal and early help offer, such as parenting, mentoring and domestic abuse programmes, taking into account those predominant key characteristics/issues evident in statutory and specialist services to enable us to effectively intervene earlier preventing escalation to specialist services. Additionally, we will further develop our universal and early help support services to take into account locality based needs as well as Borough wide needs. We will continue to monitor the impact of these supports and services to ensure we have the right supports available at the right time that make a difference.

3.6 Making a difference – Performance Outcomes Framework

- 3.6.1 A multi-agency Partnership Early Help Outcomes Framework will be developed to capture the performance indicators which measure outcomes for children, young people and their families, which will enable us to measure the effectiveness and impact of the Partnership Early Help Strategy. Croydon Safeguarding Children's Board will agree the Partnership Early Help Outcomes framework which will be introduced at the implementation of our rollout of our Partnership Early Help Strategy from autumn 2018.
- 3.6.2 It is anticipated that this Partnership Early Help Outcomes Framework will evolve over the year as we implement our Partnership Early Help Strategy enabling us to be confident of the effectiveness of our strategy and the impact this makes on supporting improvement of children's services and improving life chances for children and their families by preventing issues becoming problems, thus reducing the levels of need for children and their families in specialist and statutory services.

3.7 Croydon's Partnership Early Help delivery model – priorities 2018/20

- 3.7.1 Croydon's Partnership Early Help strategy and delivery plan will be finalised and considered at Croydon Safeguarding Partnership Board in September 2018 with an intent, if agreed, to roll this out from autumn 2018.
- 3.7.2 The Draft Croydon Partnership Early Help Strategy and delivery plan will be considered at Cabinet in September 2018.
- 3.7.3 Partner agencies will also need to agree the Croydon Partnership Early Help Strategy through their governing bodies during Autumn/Winter 2018.
- 3.7.4 A phased approach to implementation of the Croydon Partnership Early Help Strategy and delivery model is envisaged commencing in autumn 2018 and a review of this strategy and delivery model will take place after twelve months of delivery.
- 3.7.5 The Early Intervention Foundation defines a mature level of early help as **“all children and families from groups that are a priority in a local area can access the support they need, when they need it. Outcomes for children, particularly those in ‘target groups’ who might otherwise not have done so well, are excellent and continuing to get better.”**
- 3.7.6 To ensure we have a mature early help system in place we need to transform the way professionals work with each other and with families, and to develop the right culture, systems and behaviours that support the delivery of the model across the partnership. We have a strong commitment by partners to undertake this transformation and to develop the right culture, systems and behaviours needed to have a mature early help system in place in Croydon.
- 3.7.7 The Partnership Task and Finish Group in September 2018 will develop a project implementation plan (PIP) for rollout of the Partnership Early Help Strategy which will be considered and finalised at Croydon Safeguarding Board (CSCB) in late September 2018 and the CSCB and Children's Improvement Board will monitor the progress of this PIP on a minimum quarterly basis.
- 3.7.8 Priorities for development of Croydon's mature early help system for 2018 - 2020 are:
 - a) *Establish Effective Leadership, Partnership Working and Governance*
 - b) *Establish easy to use Early Help online information and advice*
 - c) *Develop a suite of tools for early help practitioners to use – ensuring a whole family strength based, consistent approach to working with children and families*
 - d) *Develop effective and timely processes for sharing information between agencies*
 - e) *Refresh structures and pathways that support the access to Early Help*
 - f) *Develop a skilled and competent workforce across the partnership*
 - g) *Develop a joint commissioning framework for early help*

3.7.9 Governance of the Croydon Partnership Early Help Strategy and delivery of universal and early help across Croydon is currently under the Croydon Safeguarding Children's Board and moving forward will be under the strategic leadership of the Children and Young People's Partnership Board once re-established, which will be aligned to the Croydon Safeguarding Children Board, Improvement Board and report to the Local Strategic Partnership Board and link to the Health and Wellbeing Board.

3.7.10 Whilst we are finalising the Croydon Partnership Early Help Strategy we will undertake a realignment of our council early help staff in readiness for delivery of an all age, locality working, partnership early help offer. We anticipate implementing the realignment following consultation with staff and unions in autumn 2018. (Appendix B)

The Council existing early help services in place, Best Start, Early Help Hub, Family Resilience Service (FRS), Parenting Hub and Family Functioning Team (FFT), will be realigned and renamed to 'Family Solutions Service'. Creating a locality based, systemic, family key worker (casework) service to work with children and families deemed as intensive need under the continuum of need, including children deemed on the edge of escalation to statutory services and those stepped down from statutory services.

Family Functioning Team (FFT) will provide borough wide edge of care interventions for children and their families.

Parenting programmes will continue to be provided for practitioners working with children and families open to both statutory and early help services.

3.7.11 Locality based Early Help hubs will continue to develop greater integration and alignment with communities and partner agencies, exploring co-location and/or coordination of processes with early years provisions, health visitors, schools, children and adult substance misuse services and emotional and mental health services.

4. CONSULTATION

4.1 The independent consultants undertaking the review of our early help offer consulted with partner agencies including the voluntary sector, stakeholders within the Council and with services users including young people and their parents.

4.2 When reviewing the Croydon Partnership Early Help Strategy after twelve months of delivery we will include stakeholders, including children and families in this review.

5. FINANCIAL AND RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

5.1 The implementation of this Early Help Strategy will enable the delivery of both service and financial efficiencies. These efficiencies will arise as a result of

effective services being delivered in a timely manner and therefore reducing demand for acute high cost services at a later stage.

- 5.2 If initial financial investment is required to fully implement the strategy then this can be funded from the transformation fund upon completion and approval of a business case.
- 5.3 In the medium term it is expected that the implementation of the Early Help Strategy will at least be cost neutral for the Council as the benefits from early intervention reduce demand and offset the higher costs of later intervention.
- 5.4 Croydon's Early Help Strategy is a shared partnership approach to delivering universal and early help services and partners will be expected to contribute to funding the offer going forward.
- 5.5 Approved by: Lisa Taylor, Director of Finance, Investment and Risk

6. COMMENTS OF THE COUNCIL SOLICITOR AND MONITORING OFFICER

- 6.1 The Solicitor to the Council comments that whilst there are no legal implications to this change programme as described in this report, there is a duty to comply with the direction of the Secretary of State following the June 2017 Ofsted inspection of children's services.
- 6.2 Approved by: Jacqueline Harris-Baker, Director of Law and Monitoring Officer

7. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT

- 7.1 A realignment of our council early help staff in readiness for delivery of an all age, locality working, partnership early help offer is planned. We anticipate implementing the realignment following consultation with staff and unions in autumn 2018. (Appendix B)
- 7.2 The Council existing early help services in place, Best Start, Early Help Hub, Family Resilience Service (FRS), Parenting Hub and Family Functioning Team (FFT), will be realigned and renamed to 'Family Solutions Service'. Creating a locality based, systemic, family key worker (casework) service to work with children and families deemed as intensive need under the continuum of need, including children deemed on the edge of escalation to statutory services and those stepped down from statutory services.
- 7.3 Family Functioning Team (FFT) will provide borough wide edge of care interventions for children and their families – predominately working with children and their families open to statutory services.
- 7.4 Parenting programmes will continue to be provided for practitioners working with children and families open to both statutory and early help services.

- 7.5 There are no anticipated redundancies.
- 7.6 A thirty day consultation with staff and unions will be undertaken to consider the changes to jobs, working practices and creation of new posts.
- 7.7 A workforce development strategy to ensure a skilled and committed workforce with robust management oversight is planned for in the implementation planning.
- 7.8 Approved by: Nadine Maloney, HR Children and Education Services, Department Lead on behalf of the Director of Human Resources

8. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 8.1 Equalities and diversity considerations are key elements of universal, early help and statutory service practice. It is imperative that all supports and services for children, young people and their families are sensitive and responsive to age, disability, ethnicity, faith or belief, gender, identity, language, race and sexual orientation.
- 8.2 Croydon has a diverse population of children and young people. Children and young people from minority ethnic groups in Croydon account for 57%, compared with 30% in the country as a whole. The proportion of children and young people with English as an additional language across primary schools is 44% (the national average is 18%)
- 8.3 The Croydon Partnership Early Help Strategy is aimed at children aged 0 to 18 years whereas the current offer is significantly weighted towards children aged 0 to 5 years.

9. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- 9.1 There are no direct implications contained in this report.

10. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT

- 10.1 It is envisaged that by delivering an all age Partnership Early Help Strategy working to intervene earlier and prevent problems presenting to social care or higher tier statutory services that in time we will see an impact on the reduction of crime and disorder.

11. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS/PROPOSED DECISION

- 11.1 To endorse the Partnership Early Help Strategy being presented to the Croydon Safeguarding Board.

12. OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

12.1 None.

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APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT: Appendix A – Final Draft Croydon Partnership Early Help Strategy
Appendix B – Realigned Croydon Early Help Services
Appendix C – Guidance for Practitioners

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

- [Ofsted single Inspection of Croydon's children's services and review of the LSCB June 2017](#)
- [Ofsted monitoring visit of Croydon's children's services March 2018](#)
- [Croydon Children's Improvement Plan November 2017](#)
- [Croydon Corporate Plan 2015-2018](#)