

Early Intervention Core Offer: A Continuum of Support

Report of the Executive Director Children's Services

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES: Learning City, Safe City

CORPORATE IMPROVEMENT: Delivering Customer Focused Services,
Efficient and Effective Council

1. Why has this report come to the Committee?

- 1.1 This report is presented to Scrutiny Committee to provide an overview and seek comments on the proposed Early Intervention Core Offer and the next steps in developing and promoting the Core Offer.

2. Background – Early Intervention supported by the Common Assessment Framework and Locality Based Integrated Working

- 2.1 Children's Services in the City of Sunderland has adopted the following definition of, and approach to, early intervention:

“intervening early and as soon as possible to tackle problems emerging for children, young people and their families or with a population most at risk of developing problems. Early intervention may occur at any point in a child or young person's life”.

“to ensure that in every local area there is a continuum of support for the many families whose needs vary over time, with children's centres and schools at its heart”

(Reference: Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People's Services, “Early Intervention - Grasping the Nettle”, 2011)

- 2.2 Integrated working is particularly important when a child or young person has needs additional to those usually met through universal services. The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is used as the key assessment tool to identify and support integrated working. CAF “is a generic and holistic early assessment of a child or young person's strengths and needs that is applicable across all children's services and the whole children and young people's workforce” (Children's Workforce Development Council).
- 2.3 With the understanding that ‘early intervention is everybody's business’, a wide range of practitioners have been trained to identify emerging needs and work with parents to complete a CAF assessment.

- 2.4 Forms are submitted to a weekly Locality CAF Panel. The Panel can assign one or more service and, where appropriate, establish a Team Around the Child (TAC) or, more frequently and in support of the 'Whole Family' approach, a Team Around the Family (TAF).
- 2.5 Locality based integrated teams have been developed, with localities co-terminus with Sunderland City Council regeneration areas, in order to support identification of needs and delivery of services which are differentiated according to the needs of the local community.
- 2.6 In order to meet needs as assessed through the CAF, the CAF Panel can draw on the support of both the locality based integrated team and specialist, City-wide teams as well as services and agencies outside of Children's Services.

3. Current Position

- 3.1 The 5 Locality Based Integrated Teams form the Early Intervention and Locality Services group, which came into being in autumn 2011. The teams currently include practitioners from Attendance, Children's Centres, Connexions, Educational Psychology, Risk and Resilience (Teenage Pregnancy, Substance Misuse and Crime Prevention) and Youth Development.
- 3.2 Specialist, City-wide Council teams that can be drawn on by the CAF Panel include Autism Outreach, Behaviour Support, support for sensory and medical difficulties, support for children from ethnic minorities, traveller children and those with English as an additional language, Community CAMHS, Child and Family Support (support for individual families and structured parenting programmes), Hidden Harm workers (support for families where there is parental substance abuse) and the Anti-social Behaviour Team (support for families affected by anti social behaviour in their community).
- 3.3 Support from teams outside of the Council that can be drawn on by the CAF Panel includes North East Council on Addictions (a regional charity supporting families where there is substance misuse and Gentoo (support for families with housing and other difficulties).
- 3.4 The Core Offer for Early Intervention, the Continuum of Support, is therefore delivered through the CAF/TAC/TAF system which is led by Early Intervention and Locality Services but facilitates the active involvement of, and swift and easy access to, a range of services at the universal, targeted and specialist levels and across the age range from conception to early adulthood. This is described at Appendix A.
- 3.5 Evaluating the impact of interventions on outcomes for children, young people and their families is done through the use of the "Outcomes Star" which measures improvement. Parental perceptions of the child's or young person from a number of dimensions - education and learning; emotional, social and behavioural development; family and social

relationships; health; wider community and environment - are measured at the initial TAF meeting and further elicited at a number of points during the life of the Team Around the Family. These are illustrated graphically on the "Outcomes Star" and given numerical values according to detailed guidance. This allows progress to be measured, recognised and celebrated. Analysis of data from "Outcomes Star" evaluations is used to identify both service contribution to positive outcomes and any gaps in services

- 3.6 The impact of interventions can also be evaluated through examination of case studies (see Appendix B)

4. **Areas for Development/Next Steps**

- 4.1 Developing and implementing a communications strategy to ensure that the core offer for early intervention is known, understood and implemented by the whole of the children's workforce and beyond so that early intervention really does become "everybody's business". This is particularly important due to the many changes in key personnel as a result of the Children's Services restructure and in supporting the understanding of thresholds for early intervention as opposed to Social Care.

- 4.2 As part of the communication process, the Children's Trust will be consulted on 10 January 2012, and Head Teacher Meetings during January and February, with plans to be made for a comprehensive re-launch of Early Intervention and CAF before Easter 2012.

- 4.2 Working with a range of partners, particularly those within Health and the voluntary and community sector, to bring more services into the "CAF family" and thus continue to extend the scope of the "Continuum of Support" and Early Intervention Offer.

- 4.3 Responding to the feedback from the recent Peer Review exercise, which highlighted the need to gain more active involvement of partners in the use of CAF as an assessment tool and in the TAC/TAF process.

- 4.4 Children's Services have included this area within the identified three year priorities. Action Plans to deliver these priorities have been developed which include a response to the Areas for Development identified above. The Action Plans will be subject to monitoring and scrutiny. Priorities identified include:

- New relationship with schools
- Early Intervention/Review of Early Years/Children's Centres
- Safeguarding
- Whole family, whole community responsive service approach.

5. Recommendation

- 5.1 Scrutiny Committee are asked to note the content of this report and particularly the Core Offer at Appendix A and to offer comment as appropriate

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