

**REPORT OF THE REPORT OF THE HEAD OF MEMBER SUPPORT AND
COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS**

CONSULTATION WITH STAFF FROM EARLY HELP TEAM

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To consider feedback from the Committee's visit to meet with staff from the Early Help Team.

2. Background

- 2.1 In setting its work programme for the year, the Committee requested that members be provided with an opportunity to meet and receive feedback from staff working for Together for Children.

3. Current Position

- 3.1 On 26 February 2019, Committee members met with staff belonging to the Early Help Team. The meeting was held at the Hetton Centre. The members in attendance included Cllr Pat Smith, Cllr Paula Hunt, Cllr Bob Francis, Cllr Fiona Miller, Cllr Claire Rowntree and Cllr Alex Scullion.
- 3.2 The meeting involved an open discussion between members and staff on the issues facing the service. In summary these included:-
- It was considered that very good progress was being made by the new Team. New ways of working were being established with a greater focus on outcomes and greater flexibility. Early intervention was vital to prevent the escalation and growth of problems into the future. Essential to this was working with the family as a whole and building up a level of trust and understanding. There was concern over the long term future of funding in particular the money currently received through the Troubled Families programme.
 - Workload was still an issue due to the increasing demand on the service. It was important that the work of the team was targeted and that it worked closely with its partners to ensure that the best use was made of available resources. Discussion took place on the factors behind the growing demand for Early Help. It was felt that there was no one single reason but more a combination of factors including the introduction of Universal Credit, benefit cuts, domestic violence, mental health issues among young people, substance misuse and a reduction in the youth offer.

- In terms of emerging issues, staff had noticed a growth in violence from children towards their parents. It was felt that this was an area that required extra support and resources. There was also considered to be a gap in services for children who witness domestic violence and require specialist help to deal with the subsequent trauma.
- There was considered to be a gap in support for young people not diagnosed but with challenging behaviours. Youth Centres and places where young people with behavioural issues or SEND and the like were not equipped or actually available to offer a service to these young people.
- There was concern over the delays in mental health assessments. It was felt that the greater recognition of such services could explain the increase in demand for its services.
- More training needs to be made available for many young people who are not yet ready for apprenticeship or college. The only existing provision is Springboard and Prince's Trust. Provision is also not easily accessible for young people who do not have access to a car and have trouble using public transport.
- It was considered that partnership working was good and joint working effective. It was recognised that the success of Early Help would depend on the joint working and collaboration. Such cooperation was encouraged by the mix of staff working at the Centre. Having two members of staff from Job Centre Plus working at the Centre has been a particular help.
- There was felt to be a concern over partners such as health and the police referring people directly to ICRT team rather than to Early Help. This had the effect of increasing the demands on the ICRT team and clogging up the system. It could also damage the long term relationship with parents.
- Work was going on to rectify this problem in order that cases were referred to the appropriate level. Also delays continued to be experienced in accessing mental health services for young people (CYPs).
- Reference was made to the benefits of Early Help staff having a presence in schools. The Team had experienced an increase in demand from schools for this service and it was anticipated that it would continue to grow.
- Experience with Liquid Logic was mixed. It was considered good from a social work and case load management point of view. However there had been teething problems on its introduction and problems were being

experienced due to social care and early help data being held separately on the system leading to a difficulty in transferring data between the two. This has led to data having to be re-created and a degree of duplication.

- Parents were facing child care place shortages under the 30 hour offer. It was felt that the offer had been inadequately funded by the Government leading to many schools not taking up the scheme.

4 Conclusion

- 4.1 The meeting with staff from the Early Help Team provided the opportunity to seek the views of staff on the development of the service.

5. Recommendations

- 5.1 The Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider the comments and feedback from staff based in the Early Help Team.

6. Glossary

None

7 Background Papers

None