

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 20 September 2018

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, People

SUBJECT: Vision for Early Help for Children and Young People

PORTFOLIO: Children, Education and Social Care

WARDS: Borough Wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To outline a potential different model of delivery for early help services

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the Board

- 1) agree the potential approach; and
- 2) agree to a project team being established to further develop the model and the options.

3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Halton has revised its Early Help Strategy with some common principles to address how we work across all ages. These are set within the context of increasing demand for services and diminishing Council resources.
- 3.2 In children's services, demand reduced significantly across both early help and social care between 2014 and 2016 through the range of support and services in place with children's centres, early intervention teams supporting partners to respond to identified need earlier and a service re-design in children's social care. Nevertheless, spend continued to rise as more children came into care during this period, at a time when our sufficiency of placements for children was reducing.
- 3.3 We are now experiencing an increase in demand across both early help and social care (17% rise in 2017/18) but we are not yet at the level recorded in 2013/14. Currently 450 children have an early intervention plan, 171 children have a child protection plan and 267 children are in care. Overall, children's social care are involved with 1,114 children at the highest level of need.
- 3.4 There are different challenges for families, with domestic abuse, parenting and behaviour needs and neglect rising against a background of universal credit, mental health needs and drug and alcohol use. Many children are living in families where there is intergenerational worklessness. Fixed term and permanent exclusions from schools have risen, particularly at primary level,

and while there has been some reduction recently following robust challenge from the local authority, these are children who continue to experience challenges in school and who are likely to place a demand on our services, and not meet their educational potential.

- 3.5 As a local authority, we have striven to continue and protect services at the lower level of need, as we recognise that the evidence base is robust for early help, and the impact that has on managing demand for statutory services. The ongoing financial pressures do now require a re-think about how those early help services are designed and how we, as a Council, improve the joint working across services internally and with partners. Specifically, we need to consider where duplication may exist, the possibility of service redesign and asset sharing.
- 3.6 Children centres are located within communities in Halton often alongside community centres; in close proximity or in the same building. There is potentially overlap in the services both provide to parents and opportunity to consider how one integrated offer can be made to families in one place rather than two separate buildings or in parts of the same building.
- 3.7 Similarly, services for young people are provided in community centres as part of the youth offer and community centre but also as part of the commissioned services. Community centres have a strong sense of the needs of their local area and the range of voluntary and community support, and the potential of that could be explored and used to support a different model of working.
- 3.8 Schools also are key providers of practical, emotional and social support in their local communities and work is taking place with schools and their pastoral staff to work together as a more unified workforce, sharing training, supervision and support.

3.9 Children's Communities

In considering what a new model might look like we have looked at what appears to be working elsewhere. A model of provision being developed in the UK is that of Children's Communities and is one that fits the principles set out in our Early Help Strategy and the place-based approach of One Halton.

3.10 Why Children's Communities

The Children's Community Network outlines the thinking behind and approach of a Children's Community, and is defined by three characteristics.

1. Children's lives and outcomes are shaped by a very wide-range of interacting factors. As babies and toddlers, they are heavily influenced by family relationships, home environment, broader social circumstances, local services, and the support available to their parents from neighbours and friends. When they get older, children spend 190 days per year at school

(around seven hours per day) and 175 days in their homes and communities, suggesting there are significant limits to what teachers alone can do, and that multiple other influences are likely to be important. What's more, children's physical and mental health, educational achievement, confidence, self-esteem, and future employment prospects are deeply interconnected and cannot be properly understood in isolation.

In disadvantaged neighbourhoods, children can face multiple and overlapping social challenges, so that action in any one part of a child's life risks being undermined by problems in another part. Conversely, in better-off areas, many children benefit from customised care and support to meet their every need, and a dizzying array of learning experiences that occur round-the-clock and 365 days a year. It is little wonder that traditional policy efforts have struggled to narrow outcomes gaps between rich and poor. For areas with complex social problems, we need a new, more integrated, and coherent approach to supporting children and families and to challenging inequalities.

2. Different places (including places with similar levels of economic disadvantage) create different dynamics, pose different challenges, and offer different opportunities. Top-down initiatives come and go, each with a focus on particular problem areas, but rarely with much understanding of the whole picture, the distinctiveness of local characteristics, or the strength and capacity for self-support that is inherent in most neighbourhoods. There is an urgent need to reframe these deficit narratives, to address local contexts, to harness the power of local assets and networks, and to create locally-led and long-term plans for transforming children's futures.

3. Now more than ever, there is a need to get the maximum value from every pound invested in local neighbourhoods so that children get what they need. Big injections of additional funds to help overcome entrenched social problems are not on the horizon. Subsequently, we need to cut-out duplication and sharpen each area's collective offer to the next generation. It's time to cut through the bureaucracy and align our efforts at a local level.

3.11 **A Children's Community is:**

A NEIGHBOURHOOD: Children's Communities are located in disadvantaged places with a history of partnership working for children and a collective commitment to take this to the next level.

A SHARED VISION: Local services develop and implement a coordinated plan for helping children thrive, based on a shared vision for children and a shared analysis of children's needs.

INTEGRATED AND HOLISTIC: Children's Communities support children in the round and across the different stages of childhood, helping them to transition between family, school and community.

GENERATIONAL: Children's Communities work over the long-term. They tackle presenting symptoms and underlying causes simultaneously.

POWERED BY LOCAL VOICES: Children's Communities are locally led. They identify their strengths, harness the power of local networks and relationships, and support people to find their own solutions.

NATIONALLY EVALUATED: The Children's Community project is underpinned by a body of research and evidence, and is being nationally evaluated by Sheffield Hallam University.

- 3.12 Halton has a number of advantages in pursuing such an approach given its involvement in Big Local and also in the proposal currently being considered for Windmill Hill. There is strong strategic commitment in innovating and delivering differently, and we also have the experience of being involved in Big Local that stands us in good stead in working with communities and partners.
- 3.13 Similarly, partnership working at the local level is demonstrable by the work we have committed to as part of the Healthy New Town in Halton Lea, where the unusual bedfellows of regeneration, health and social care are working together to transform the health and wellbeing of the area
- 3.14 The Children's Communities model is a good framework for developing a "place-based" services model at the lower level of need but we envisage that not only delivers a "cradle to career" approach for children and young people but also for families and communities as a whole.
- 3.14 Having had an initial review of our assets, we can see that, for example, the current children's centre service offer in Halton Brook would readily transfer into Grangeway Community Centre as part of this "place-based" approach. This could lead to improved integration and co-ordination of services reduce duplication and refocus activity and support. This would require further work to develop.
- 3.15 If there is agreement to develop this as a different model of delivery of early help and early intervention, the recommendation is for a project team to be established under the Early Intervention Strategic Board to include officers from Communities and Regeneration services to scope out the opportunities for services to be delivered from one place, with partners and the potential to rationalise both buildings and in the medium term management under one integrated approach.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 As the project progresses changes to asset management, staffing and resource allocation may be required.

5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The current model of delivery is not able to respond to current demands in Children Services, and alternative approaches need to

be delivered.

5.2 A limited invest-to-save approach may need to be taken to realise the changes to service delivery and remodelling of assets.

5.3 The initial project team will be sourced from existing resources

6.0 RISK ANALYSIS

6.1 The scale of the financial challenge is significant and the above approach may not lead to immediate savings and as such other decisions will need to be made as outlined earlier.

6.2 The level of demand is continuing to rise and reduction or removal of services at the lower level of need may lead to demand escalating quicker at higher levels of need compromising the capacity of Children's Social Care and higher costs to meet those needs.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

7.1 Children & Young People in Halton

This will help maintain the Council's commitment to supporting children and families area and preventing them coming into statutory services.

7.2 Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton

Will develop staffing expertise and increase their ability to provide tailored, needs led support.

7.3 A Healthy Halton

Will improve the health of those residents to whom the proposals will apply

7.4 A Safer Halton

Not Applicable

7.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

Not Applicable

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 None

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

None