

LONDON BOROUGH OF HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM

Report to: Children and Education Policy and Accountability Committee

Date: 16/11/2021

Subject: Family Support In-House Transfer

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Responsible Director: Jacqui McShannon, Director of Children's Services

SUMMARY

In April 2021 Early Help and Early Years staff and services within the Family Support LATC returned to Children's Services Education and Children and Young People's department. This has provided an exciting opportunity to build on the award-winning success of Family Support to ensure H&F is the best place for children and young people to grow up, allowing us to enhance our early intervention offer through joint working and integration to support families earlier.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Committee note and comment on the report.

Wards Affected: All

Our Values	Summary of how this report aligns to the H&F Values
Building shared prosperity	Enhancing our integrated early intervention offer to ensure children, young people and families have access to support and opportunities for success.
Creating a compassionate council	Expanding our early intervention offer to prevent upstream demand, offering the right support to the right families at the right time.
Doing things with local residents, not to them	Working closely with providers and the service during the transition period to ensure no impact to service users.
Being ruthlessly financially efficient	Improving service efficiency by ensuring greater join up with statutory services, preventing upstream demand at high cost.

Taking pride in H&F	Ensuring H&F is the best place to grow up by working to build upon and improve our existing services to provide the right help at the right time.
Rising to the challenge of the climate and ecological emergency	Facilitating joint working through consolidated use of buildings including Children's Centres subject to COVID risk assessment process. Removing requirement for FSS LATC Head Office.

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Background Papers Used in Preparing This Report

None.

DETAILED ANALYSIS

1. It was agreed in December 2020 that Children's Early Help and Early Years Services delivered by Family Support Services would be incorporated within the local authority's Children's Services department effective from 1st April 2021.
2. A project group formed of cross-council colleagues was introduced to action the stages of re-integration, delivering the successful onboarding of staff and existing contracts necessary to support the delivery of Early Help and Early Years services.
3. Throughout the consultation and transfer process services were able to successfully continue to deliver early intervention work with families across a range of complex cases. Additionally, the virtual children's centre platform continued to support the staged delivery of children's centre provision during COVID-19.

ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE

4. Since transferring into the Local Authority, the Early Help and Early Years team have continued to deliver a comprehensive support offer for children, young people and families, including building upon existing programmes and delivering new initiatives.

EARLY HELP

Case Work Service

5. Family Support is a consent-based service and works with families to identify individual needs and support delivery of a range of interventions. Our Family Support Practitioners take a trauma informed approach to supporting the whole family towards positive outcomes, offering targeted support to ensure families get the right help at the right time and avoiding unnecessary escalation into statutory services. Supporting approximately 800 families on an annual basis the team works with families who are experiencing a range of challenges from mental health, domestic abuse, poverty, chaotic family life and related issues such as school attendance and behavioural problems. Utilising a range of tools to facilitate reflective discussion between parents and children, the team identify support needs and provide interventions to develop parenting skills, enhance family health and wellbeing and school attendance.
6. Since April the Early Help service has strengthened its relationship with colleagues across our initial contact and assessment team, family assist, education and statutory social care services to maximise impact and ensure a joined-up approach to supporting our families.

Traded Offer

7. The Family Support Early Help Traded Offer delivered via the Professional Development Centre, provides a bespoke service and audit to schools as well as continuation, guidance and recommendations on implementing a trauma informed. Our Traded Offer focuses on the provision of support for pastoral

care, behavioural issues, attendance concerns and challenges within a student's home. Our practitioners offer both individual work and focused group-work with young people and their families by creating intervention plans using evidence-based tools to improve outcomes for young people.

8. An example of the intervention and training delivered by practitioners is the use of virtual reality decision making education programmes offering an interactive form of therapeutic work. As part of this contract, the Early Help team have delivered staff training on early trauma indicators in 4 primary schools, and training for young people at risk of exploitation in 1 secondary academy. Additionally, all staff in Kensington Academy have been trained through the use of these trauma informed video sessions. The service plan to further develop this offer through collaboration with the Educational Psychology traded offer, enabling more schools to benefit from this interactive training.
9. This offer has continued to grow since returning into the local authority with 5 schools already signed up to the offer from September 2022.

Transition and Resilience Programme

10. Continued delivery of the Transition and Resilience Programme by Family Support Early Help Intensive Inclusion Practitioners funded by the Youth Endowment Fund. The project provides intensive wrap-around support to identified children and young people; including counselling, mentoring and digital support, to build functional skills, increase resilience and improve well-being. The project also has a long term aim to reduce youth violence.
11. The programme supports up to four cohorts of 25 pupils for a period of 6 months, thereafter, stepped down for continued mentoring support with Active Successful Engagement (ASE).

Integrated Performance Monitoring

12. Working with colleagues in the Safeguarding, Quality Assurance and Review team, the Early Help team are developing an integrated performance monitoring and QA framework within the processes already established across Children and Young People's Service. The data collection and QA framework inherited during the transfer requires development to improve accuracy in reporting impact and outcomes of practitioner interventions. The service are working to identify capacity and resource to develop this promptly.
13. Family Support audits are graded good and above, demonstrating impressive relationship building by the service with families and young people. There is evidence of a range of tools, such as Tree of Life, the Miracle question, solution focussed models, which facilitate reflective discussion between parents and children and assist to understand and identify the support they need. Audits also identify the strength of collaboration between Family Support and CAS, particularly where there has been a need to step up due to increased risks for the children. Now that we have transitioned the service successfully, we will be building on this success and evaluating the reach and impact by developing a bespoke dashboard for the service

Mentalisation Based Training

14. The Family Support Early Help team have been successful in securing Reducing Parental Conflict grant from the DWP which funds training to improve understanding of the harmful outcomes of frequent and poorly resolved conflict and how this can be addressed by working with families.
15. Grant monies will be used to fund mentalisation based training for our practitioners, an integrative approach bringing together psychodynamic principles, systemic theory, CBT practices and a social ecological framework to understanding and working with families to address a range of difficulties including emotional and behavioural problems, relational difficulties, and family conflict. Practitioners will be trained to support parents to focus on not only the feelings and emotions they are experiencing, but those of their children, learning to modify their behaviour and recognise different perspectives. This aims to close the link between poorer child mental health and long-term life outcomes associated with poorly resolved parental conflict. Delivery of training is set to commence in October 2021 via the Anna Freud Centre.

Additional Community Support

16. The Early Help service offer also encompasses a range of commissioned voluntary and community sector organisations who work closely with Children's services to support families in the community. Examples of this provision includes:
 - Safe Families is a volunteer support service for families used to offer continued support following direct work by the service. The contract aims to offer support to 100 families over a 2-year period to offer continued at home and community-based support for vulnerable families.
 - Active Successful Engagement (ASE) offer mentoring alongside and following step down from the Transition and Resilience Programme and wider practitioner work. The service particularly targets children and young people at risk of crime, worklessness, homelessness and young people leaving care to offer support and guidance.

EARLY YEARS

Early Years Funded Childcare

17. The early years' service has proactively introduced a number of measures which have led to increased numbers of children securing funded childcare places. This restrictions imposed on our schools and settings during the pandemic has slowed progress, however, since the COVID restrictions were lifted in Spring 2021, numbers continue to increase, with Autumn estimates showing an increase in both two, three and four-year-old funded places compared to Summer actuals.
18. The improvement of the numbers of children accessing funded childcare remains a key priority for the Early Years Team. Working alongside the DfE, a take-up strategy has been implemented including measures to target resources

such as improved promotion of places, streamlining the application process, and targeting eligible parents through our children's centres. These measures and their impact upon the take up figures will be closely monitored across the year to ensure improvements with a particular focus on 2-year-old funded childcare places.

Childcare Sufficiency

19. Our recent Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA) report, which provides the latest analysis of the supply and demand of childcare, along with parents' views on childcare in Hammersmith and Fulham, identified sufficient childcare within the borough.
20. The CSA was published in January 2021 and covered data up to and including Autumn 2020. This report analyses historic data over a longer period to contextualise our understanding of sufficiency, therefore covering the period 2018-2020. We are keen to understand the impact of COVID on the childcare market and family need; therefore our 2020 research has focused particularly on the impact of COVID on demand and supply of childcare. A further CSA will be published in January 2022 with work already underway.

COVID Support

21. Our Early Years sector were instrumental during the pandemic providing flexible childcare to our vulnerable children and children of key workers. Our Early Years Team provided enhanced support to the sector throughout the pandemic by providing a number of additional support services. These included regular communications, monitoring sufficiency of places and providing additional funds to those settings who remained open. The Council also provided an uplift in early years funding to support those settings who also offer funded childcare places.
22. With support from Public Health colleagues, the Team were able to provide additional support to settings with completing and regularly reviewing their risk assessments, infection control measures and outbreak management. Since the pandemic began, only 4 of our 64 settings have had to close.

Training Hubs

23. The Early Years Team are working with the Maintained Nursery Schools to provide additional guidance, training and support to our in-borough early years sector, allowing our outstanding rated nursery schools to share expertise. The offer includes termly cluster meetings for EYFS Curriculum Leads and childminders, the first of which has already taken place, which was well attended and well received.
24. The Early Years Team are working alongside partners including H&F Adult Education to provide additional training packages for the sector. This will provide additional capacity to offer a range of much needed support including courses for childminders new to the sector and SENCo support. The Team have worked closely with the sector to identify the training needs most required and responded with a number of courses, some of which will be certified.

Children's Centres

25. Our Virtual children's centre, Alby's Place, ensured we continued to deliver valued early years sessions during the pandemic. Our children's centre staff also worked closely with our Early Help team to deliver targeted one-to-one and small bubble group provision to our most in need families. More recently the Early Years Team have managed the successful staged reopening of some of our key children's centres. Families are able to book onto a range of sessions across the borough which are now well attended. The Early Years Team are now hosting termly meetings with our children's centres partners Urban Partnership Group and Rays Playhouse to strengthen partnership working.

Support for Afghan Families

26. The Early Years Team were able to respond quickly to the emerging childcare and early education needs of the Afghan families temporarily housed in a hotel in the borough. The team delivered tailor-made children's centre sessions and services ran from a local school close to the hotel, providing a walking bus to and from the school. These sessions included activities within the Afghan families home languages provided by existing staff members. The service has also supported families to explore childcare options within the borough and assist with placements within local childcare providers.

Joint Work with Health Partners

27. The Early Years Team work closely with our health partners from midwifery and health visitors who operate from some of Children's Centres to ensure a coordinated approach to supporting our families. It is our ambition to continue to build on this and increase the take up of integrated two-year-old health and education checks for our families within the children's centres which focus on early identification and support.

EYFS Curriculum Reforms

28. The Early Years Team have developed and delivered EYFS Reform briefing sessions with all our private, voluntary and independent settings and childminders, primary school early years foundation stage coordinators, primary and maintained nursery school headteachers and governors in light of the Early Years Foundation Stage Reforms which have been in place since September 2021. The Team also worked alongside our Maintained Nursery Schools to deliver an Early Years Conference on the reforms and impact on practice. These sessions were well received, and our keynote speaker Julian Grenier was able to provide valuable expertise as author of the supplementary EYFS curriculum guidance.

Special Educational Needs Inclusion Funding (SENIF)

29. Following a review of the funding criteria and application process by the Early Years Team alongside schools, providers, SEND and Health colleagues last academic year due to low take up, the numbers of applications have increased substantially with settings receiving £300,000 of funding to support children with

emerging to more complex needs. The Team work alongside SEND colleagues at the EHCP Panel to ensure applications for SENIF are considered alongside other SEND funding streams. The funding pot has increased to £500,000 for the next academic year to respond to the growing demand from schools and settings in meeting the needs of children with emerging SEND.

FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

30. We are increasingly seeing families with multiple and complex needs, requiring support from our specialist services. We plan to build on the strong early intervention foundations laid by Family Support Services to ensure families are getting the right support as early as possible and know an integrated approach is key to this.
31. We will use this opportunity to improve integrated joint working between Early Help, Early Years, the wider Children's department and voluntary sector to maximise opportunities for early intervention work. Further, we will ensure children and young people receive a wraparound support offer through better linking our Children's Centre services with the wider Children's Services including SEND Teams, Early Years Childcare and Schools. We will do this set against the context of increased financial pressure, and we need to ensure our investment is effective, managing demand and cost to our statutory services.
32. Further, to deliver the right services we know that we need a workforce with the right skills, training and resources. To do this, we will work to develop the existing skills within our workforce. One example is to build upon the knowledge of our Early Years staff to ensure they are fully informed on all family offers available throughout Children's Services to better link families to support services and identify appropriate resources. Additionally, we will work with our Early Help service, alongside the wider social care service, to develop their knowledge and skills in supporting complex children and young people, particularly those with ASD and/or mental health needs who require additional support.

LIST OF APPENDICES

None.