

# Understanding the development of an effective local early help offer

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## Presentation of the final report

19 March 2019



# The aims of the research

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1

Reviewing the existing material and research in terms of what works in Early Help.

2

Understanding in practical terms the activities and actions that contribute to the development and sustainability of an effective and partnership-based early help offer.

3

Supporting local areas through an action-research based approach to develop their own early help offers and to contribute to the wider system knowledge of effective early help .

# Methodology



| Phase 1: Sept - Oct  | Phase 2: Nov - Dec  | Phase 3: Jan  | Phase 4: Feb - Mar  |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Scoping existing literature and research</li><li>• Recruiting local areas to participate</li><li>• Developing tools and frameworks</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fieldwork in 8 local areas, chosen on the basis of the strength of their early help offer and to give a good contextual mix</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Action learning sets / workshops involving all 8 local areas to refine practice and jointly problem solve</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reporting and disseminating findings through 4 regional workshops</li></ul> |

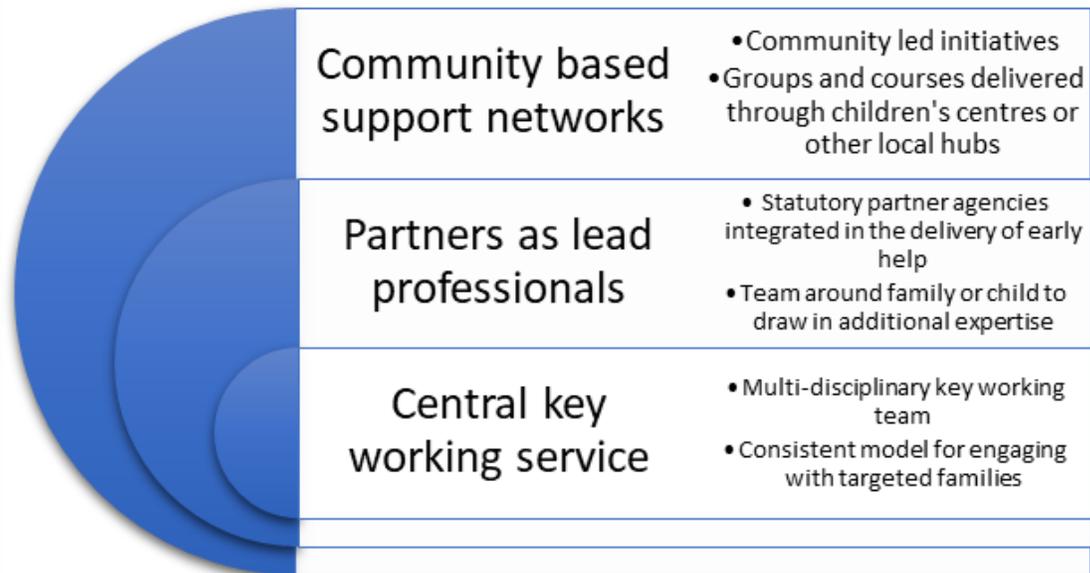
- Following the launch of the report we will be disseminating the findings through four regional workshops - dates and locations to be confirmed.



# What do we mean by a local ‘early help offer’?

*Each local area had taken their own distinctive approach to developing their early help offer. However, there were some clear similarities between the eight areas in terms of organisation and principles.*

## Organisational similarities



## Similar principles

- The earliness of early help
- Working with families, rather than individuals
- Building resilience
- An integrated – joined up offer

*“An effective early help offer brings together local partners to provide good quality early support for children and families that builds their resilience, prevents difficulties from escalating and leads to better outcomes that are sustained.”*



# The lifecycle of early help

## The evolution of a local early help offer



# The key enablers of an effective early help offer?



# Setting the direction

## Leading with passion

- Foster a strong conviction among senior leaders that intervening early will help change lives and avoid risks developing into crises.
- Demonstrate belief in the value of early help, and communicate this passion, drive and commitment to staff and partners.
- Be prepared to take measured organisational risks in the pursuit of more effective early help.
- Foster a culture where early help is not just another service, but a flexible, family-focused approach at the heart of the organisation.

## Clearly articulating the vision

- Develop a concise and compelling vision for early help, grounded in providing the right support for families at the right time.
- Articulate that early help is everyone's business, that all professionals have a role to play in the early help offer, supported and supervised by skilled early help professionals. (Distinguish between early help as an *offer* and early help as a *service*.)
- Communicate this vision in concise and compelling terms that inspires, empowers and enables professionals.

## Securing a long-term commitment

- Develop consistent and in-depth leadership focus that crosses political boundaries and electoral cycles.
- Long-term funding commitment, aided by national programmes such as Troubled Families, but sustained locally.
- Develop effective, formal governance arrangements that formalise partnership working and relationships for the long-term.

## Agreeing a small number of targets

- Be selective – focus on a small number of priorities, select meaningful outcome-based targets, and use these to track the impact of the early help offer.
- Select targets that contribute to key corporate objectives, creating a golden thread that places early help at the centre of the organisation.
- Marry bottom-up innovation with top-down rigour.



# Developing capacity

## Creating the core team

- Bring together staff from different professional backgrounds to form a “key-worker” / “lead professional” capacity.
- Invest in training staff to create a shared culture and way of working that cross professional boundaries and disciplines. Peer support and supervision. Model new ways of working.
- Develop a culture of no “inward” referrals. Co-locate where possible.
- Develop clear early help career pathways to attract talent.

## Harnessing the power of communities

- Maintain a constant focus on building resilience through support – tackle the mindset of reliance on public services.
- Maintain close links with local communities to know and be able to draw upon what the community has to offer.
- Be open to suggestions and opportunities from the community, and willing to try doing something differently and then test it.
- Invest in community support options and initiatives, but with a view to creating sustainability not dependence.

## Empowering and enabling partners

- Work with partners to shape the overall vision, offer and model of practice. Engage partners in strategic governance.
- Invest in training and supporting professionals (schools, early years, police, health, the VCS), so that they feel confident to deliver early help interventions and hold early help cases.
- Provide clarity on the range of support and services that can be drawn upon for individual families.
- Establish systems to support the effective management of risk.

## Developing a coherent offer around place

- Utilise physical assets, where they exist, to maintain a “public face” of early help which is non-stigmatising.
- Use the opportunities of locality-based working to bring professionals together, and create deep community knowledge.
- Work with schools, early years centres, GP practices so that early support can be delivered by professionals and in places at the heart of local communities.
- Have a flexible offer that takes account of needs of localities.



# Working with families

## Establishing a safe and effective front door

- Create a single front door to early help, into which different routes funnel, to ensure safe and consistent triaging of need.
- Foster strong alignment, integration or co-location with the front door to children's social care – strong processes in place so that decisions can be taken jointly about where and how a family is best supported. "Passing the baton, not the buck."
- Have support that can be deployed quickly so that the window of opportunity to engage a family is not missed.

## Focusing on the needs of the family as a whole

- Establish the family, rather than the individual, as the focus of intervention.
- Join up services around the family so their story is told once.
- Look to address the underlying needs rather than the presenting symptoms.
- Challenge other services that see individuals to think in terms of supporting families more holistically.

## Developing a practice model based on evidence

- Develop a consistent practice model for all professionals involved in the early help offer that is based on evidence of what works. Consistent approaches to assessment and tracking progress.
- Ensure that the model of practice is shared across the wider early help offer and with partners, including social care and the police.
- Utilise strength-based practices that focus on a family's ability to make improvements for themselves.
- Develop a smooth continuum between early help and social care.

## Promoting resilience and being responsive

- Recognise that families needs will change over time and therefore creating the capacity to be flexible in the level of support on offer.
- Design and deliver services that are responsive to family needs.
- Focus on creating long-term resilience and coping strategies within families, but also be pragmatic about supporting families with complex, ongoing challenges.
- Maintain strong processes for ending an engagement with a family including periodic "checking in" and in some cases re-engagement.



# Evaluating impact and quality

## Developing an effective Management Information system

- Develop a management information system that is reliable, minimises the barriers to data sharing across services, and allows multiple partners to engage with the data.
- Develop reporting processes and forms that are easy to understand and not overly burdensome.
- Invest in training in how to use the system well.
- Develop reports that enable the tracking of outcomes as well as family journeys over time.

## Being clear about the desired impact

- Work with families to ensure that outcomes are agreed at the outset and then measured in a consistent and collaborative way.
- Develop sensible and consistent ways in which to measure and record the progress made by individual families.
- Be clear what system level impacts are desired and agree a suite of measures that can demonstrate progress against these, including both indicators around reduction in demand for statutory services and achieving long-term positive outcomes.

## Auditing and quality assuring practice

- Develop a robust approach to quality assurance and audit.
- Create collaborative approaches to audit that enable learning to be shared across services and partners.
- Define what good practice looks like in early help key work.
- Test the consistent and safe application of statutory thresholds at the higher levels of intervention.

## Putting in place proportionate and informative reporting

- Develop a suite of performance reports or metrics that are meaningful and enable the right questions to be asked about impact.
- Use performance reporting tools to motivate staff and team leaders, within a culture of celebrating success.
- Create a reporting system that is clear, streamlined and fit for purpose with a focus on a few key metrics.



# The future of early help

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