

<b>Report to:</b>	<b>CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>
<b>Relevant Officer:</b>	Joanne Stewart , Head of Early Help and Support
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	22 September 2022

## **EARLY HELP STRATEGY AND PARTNERSHIP WORKING.**

### **1.0 Purpose of the report:**

1.1 To report on partnership working in implementing the Early Help Strategy (Appendix 6(a))

### **2.0 Recommendation(s):**

2.1 To note :

- The active participation of partners in the implementation of the Early Help Strategy
- The work being undertaken to support Partners to do this
- The learning and the challenges in embedding the early help approach

2.2 To identify any areas for additional scrutiny where appropriate.

### **3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):**

3.1 The Early Help strategy is key to improving outcomes for children and families in Blackpool and, reducing the demand on higher level services, for the Council and its partner agencies. There is much research around the better outcomes for children and families if we support earlier and the cost benefits of working in this way.

3.2 Key to an effective early help offer is the wider group of partners that work with children and families. Their role in identifying and working with families as soon as problems arise, before issues become more concerning is central to the aims and objectives of early help work.

3.4 Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No

3.5 Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? Yes

#### 4.0 Other alternative options to be considered:

4.1 None.

#### 5.0 Council priority:

5.1 The relevant Council priority is  
“Communities: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience”

#### 6.0 Background information

6.1 The Early Help Strategy was launched in November 2021 and draws on the Early Help System Guide developed through the Governments Supporting Families programme (formerly called Troubled Families) which sits in the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. (Appendix 6(b))

6.2 The strategy focuses on how we (the Council and the Partnership) support children, young people and their families who need a more co-ordinated response through an early help assessment and plan as soon as problems arise and before they need higher levels of support.

6.3 This Early Help Strategy sets out that early help is everyone’s responsibility and the way in which we should work with families who need help.

6.4 Strong partnership working is key to the success of the strategy and there has been good support from across the partnership for this development:

6.4.1 **Governance:** The strategy is owned by the Children and Families Strategic Partnership. This multiagency group supported the development of the strategy and request regular updates about its progress.

6.4.2 **Strategic Leadership:** There is an established multiagency steering group focused on leading early help work. Chaired by the Council’s Director of Children’s Services it sees Police, Health providers and commissioners, Education and Voluntary organisations represented by senior officers. This group has been the vehicle to establish partner organisations understanding about early help work, where it fits with their system and some of the challenges faced by them.

6.4.3 **Operational Leadership:** The Blackpool Families Rock Implementation Group provides a forum to share new developments, training and development opportunities with a wider group of partners such as Housing providers, Probation, commissioned services such as Drug and Alcohol treatment services.

6.4.4 **Support for Lead Professionals:** Three new job roles, Early Help Link Workers, have been

implemented in the Councils formal family support service. These roles are designed to support any would be lead professional in any organisation to undertake an early help assessment and develop a plan with a family. The main area of focus to date has been with school colleagues, where initially workers made contact with schools to offer support. There has been a lot of positive feedback about the support that these workers have offered and now schools partners are actively seeking support from the team. A Better Start is now funding an additional three posts to support those partners who work with children in their early years.

6.4.5 **Workforce development:** An Early Help Workshop has been developed that aims to build a better understanding of the strategy and how as a lead professional you undertake an early help assessment and plan with a family along with how to bring a range of professionals together as a team around a family to support them. This workshop rolled out in May 2021 and saw over 100 people book a place in the first week. To date 140 people have attended a workshop from 34 different organisations including schools staff, police, health visitors, SEND support officers. A further 130 people are signed up to sessions that will run in September and October.

6.4.6 **Project work:** Through Opportunity Area Funding there have been two projects linked to the Early Help strategy. The aim of each project was to build capacity in partner services by building skill, knowledge, understanding and confidence in taking the lead professional role. This in each project was done by providing by providing 'training' modelling, coaching and support from an experienced Family Worker:

- Family Workers in schools: This project saw four Family Workers deployed to, and based in, two high schools (Unity and South shore). The workers were managed through the Early Help and Support Service.
- The Claremont Project: This project took a neighbourhood approach to early help work but used Westminster Primary school as the focal point. The project was multiagency and involved health, police, leisure service, and school staff leading on early help work supported by the Early Help and Support Service.

#### Outcomes and learning from projects

- Staff reported having a better understanding about what a good early help assessment and plan looks like and how to do this work.
- It gave colleagues a better understanding of how to draw a team of people together to support a family (Team Around the Family) and the range of services available to support the families' plans
- Staff were more confident to engage families in a discussion about their worries and needs, to offer help and explain what an early help assessment is. They also reported increased confidence in having challenging conversations with parents.
- Staff saw benefits in working in this way and the positive impact it can have.
- Staff saw the value and importance of reflective case supervision for Lead

professionals

- The co-location of Family Workers in schools was extremely positive and was welcomed by staff, school leaders and by young people in school.
- Having a named Link Worker for the Claremont area that practitioners could draw support from was seen as real strength by range of partners involved in the project.

6.5 **Challenges:** Implementing this strategy fully and seeing its impact will take time, it isn't a quick fix. Working in this way requires partners to build ownership and see this as part of their work not an additional task as it is perhaps feels now.

Partners involvement in discussion around the Early help strategy has sustained across this year but colleagues, schools and police in particular, have shared that without additional resources ( like those afforded through the project work) their ability to take the lead professional role will be limited due to staffing difficulties and levels of need and demand. How we support colleagues and use the learning from project working is an ongoing discussion in Childrens Services.

There has been an increase in families supported by the Council's Family Support Team but we cannot as yet see the work held by partners. Work is underway to develop a way of collecting early help work centrally to allow us to draw a range of data together (number of children supported, by whom and their outcomes) but this will not be in place until later this year.

6.6 Does the information submitted include any exempt information? No

**7.0 List of Appendices:**

7.1 Appendix 6(a) - Early Help Strategy 2021-2023

Appendix 6(b) - Supporting Families Early Help System Guide

**8.0 Financial considerations:**

8.1 None

**9.0 Legal considerations:**

9.1 None

**10.0 Risk management considerations:**

10.1 None

**11.0 Equalities considerations:**

11.1 The Early Help Strategy and approach is available to all children, young people and their families in Blackpool regardless of any protected characteristics.

**12.0 Sustainability, climate change and environmental considerations:**

12.1 None

**13.0 Internal/external consultation undertaken:**

13.1 None

**14.0 Background papers:**

14.1 None