



**Agenda Item
9**

Report Status

For information/note X
For consultation & views
For decision

Report to Haringey Schools Forum – Thursday 20th October 2016

Report Title: Early Help Service update

**Author: Jon Abbey. Director of Children’s Services
Gareth Morgan. Head of Service, Early Help and Prevention**

Contact: 0208 489 4931 Email: Gareth.morgan@haringey.gov.uk

1. **Purpose: To report on the implementation of a new approach to Early Help provision.**

Recommendations:

1. **We recommend that members note the changes being introduced by the Early Help service in October 2016**

1. Report

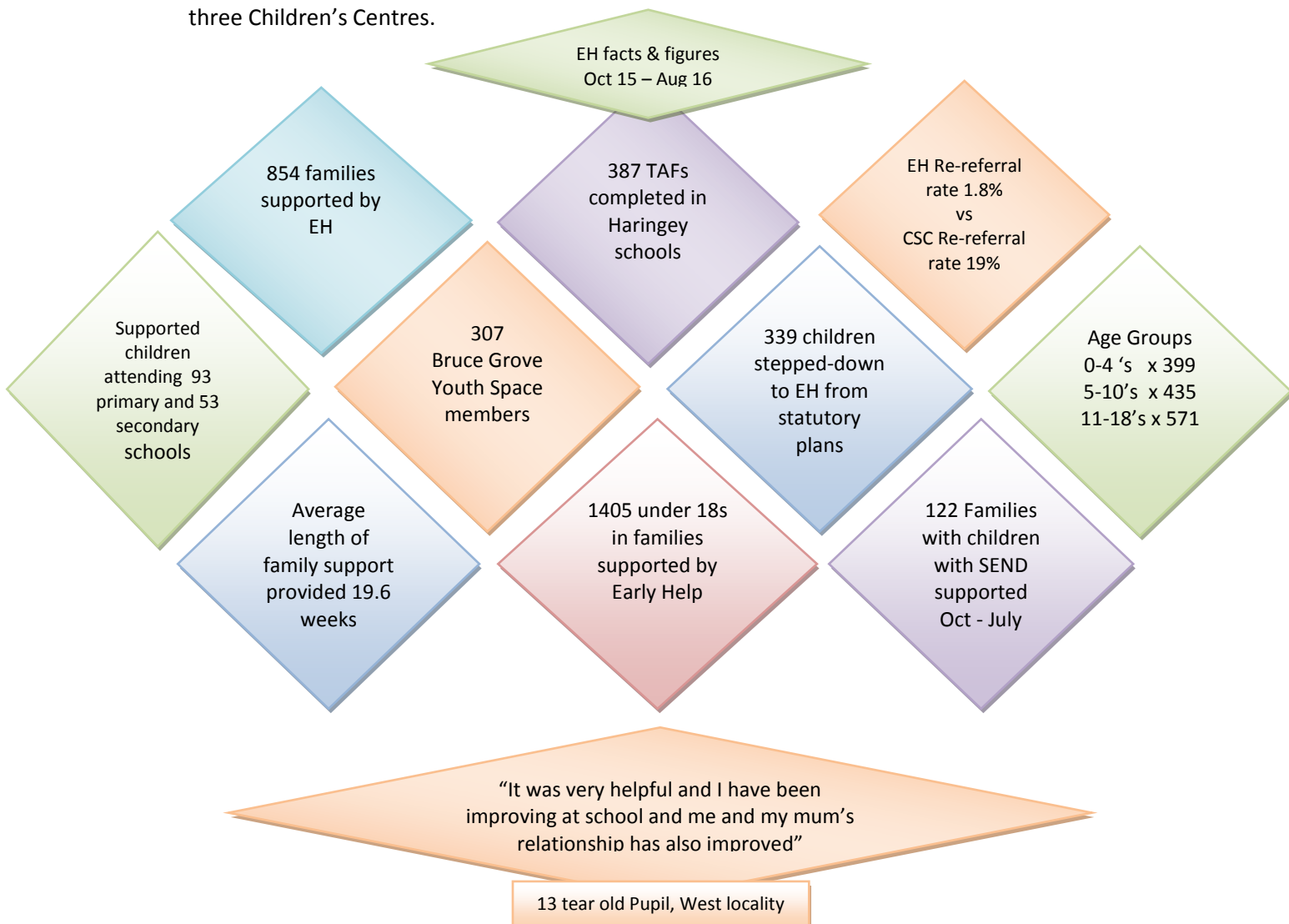
1.1. Introduction and background

The Locality model for Early Help was introduced on 5th October 2015.

This paper provides Schools Forum with an update on the service changes which are being introduced to respond to feedback from services, settings and families to enhance the service offer and increase the effectiveness of partnerships across the wider early help workforce.

“Evidence from Ofsted’s single inspections of local authorities and from this thematic inspection shows clearly that the offer of help to families when concerns first arise is increasingly prioritised by local authorities and their partners. As a result, more children are benefiting from better focused and coordinated support earlier. Early help workers increasingly feel part of professional networks and therefore are less isolated and more supported”. (Ofsted. ‘Early Help - Whose Responsibility?’ 2015)

Early Help locality teams deliver direct work with families enabling them to achieve improved outcomes. It also includes completing assessments, supporting and coordinating TAF’s and multi-agency activity and delivering agreed family action plans. The Early Help and Prevention Service also includes delivery of the governments Troubled Families agenda, Youth Service provision including the RPA and NEET agenda’s and the direct management of three Children’s Centres.



2. Continuous Improvement.

As has previously been reported at Schools Forum, the Early Help locality model has seen a significant increase in engagement levels with schools across the borough and children and young people supported by the service attend **93% of the borough schools**. Although this is a significant increase in reach (65% in October 2015), we recognise that accessing the service has not been as quick and effective for families and schools as we would want.

Delays in receiving a response and clear offer of support from Early Help has on occasion been unacceptably slow and in some cases has resulted in families not engaging with the service which can lead to escalation of problems. Responding to feedback from schools and families led to a Service Review being completed using the 'Lean Review' methodology, to identify key points in the early help process where efficiency could be safely improved.

We have also reviewed the way agencies access Early Help and how the offer to schools can be enhanced, to increase the partnership's ability to respond to children and families with emerging needs that are clearly at Tier 2, rather than retaining cases until they approaching the statutory threshold. In these cases, schools will be encouraged to discuss family needs directly with early help practitioners and managers and engage the service at the earliest opportunity.

As a result of the 'Lean Review' and some innovative thinking about how the service is seen and felt across universal settings, '**Conversations 4 Change**' has been developed by the council as its Early Help approach in Haringey, to promote the timeliness of the service response to families with emerging needs and to encourage and enable schools to access appropriate support for ongoing family work.

3. Conversations 4 Change

Conversations 4 Change (C4C) is a new approach and a different way of working that creates a clear separation between social care and early help in Haringey. By changing the emphasis from social care practice and rigid processes to a focus on meaningful dialogue and purposeful activity, the delays in responding to requests for service will be reduced – supported by ambitious service standards. The level of meaningful engagement will increase and consequently, improved outcomes for families will be achieved sooner and more sustainably.

In addition to the new internal processes, C4C is supported by a small number of Early Help specific documents which will enable and encourage practitioners from across the wider early help workforce to begin using common language and forms in relation to early intervention and share information in the same format. These documents will be available from the Early Help pages of the council's website.

Simplifying documentation and the adoption of common language will also enable colleagues in any setting to adopt or retain the role of 'lead practitioner', in order to maintain effective and productive relationships with families while accessing the additional specialist resources available through the Early Help service. This will provide additional support, skills and capacity for a defined period of time, without handing responsibility for ongoing coordination and family support to another service. This will prevent families having to repeat their stories and build new relationships with different practitioners when seeking support. This approach will help us maximise the capacity of the partnership and increase the value to families of the early help offer in Haringey.

The other significant change in Early Help is the service's ability to provide a more pro-active offer to settings in order to reduce delays in families receiving support and simplifying the administrative process for accessing Early Help.

By creating additional capacity within the service through process efficiencies the service will be able to attend meetings arranged by schools to meet with vulnerable families where there are emerging concerns and with families consent, where appropriate accept them for Early Help support - at source – no contact or referral via SPA. This offer will be rolled out incrementally following implementation.

The planned benefits from implementing C4C are summarised as;

- Supports effective response to early identification of need
- Provides universal settings with shorter pathway to non-statutory support
- Increased timeliness of allocation and initial contact and engagement with families
- Expand wider workforce capacity by development of lead practitioner model with access to specialist resources via the early help service
- Increased case throughput – through proportionate and realistic support plans which enable timely behavioural change
- Standardising the recording of evidence of impact using common format/tools across partnership (Outcome Star)
- Enable early help partnership practice to become embedded in localities
- Support ongoing needs assessment to informing/refining future delivery model
- Improved baseline data and evidence of progress to support maximum TF claims

4. Identified Cohort focus.

A further benefit of the increased capacity derived from implementation of the C4C approach, is the ability of the service to target some resource towards identified cohorts of young people, where it is known that without intervention their outcomes will be poor. For example, by using shared intelligence effectively, Early Help can be offered to families already known to services but where their escalating or poor behaviours can be influenced through direct early help support. This investment will not only benefit families through improved outcomes, but reduce demand on longer-term and high cost services across the partnership. Examples where we are looking to support identified cohorts are:

- Young people with SEND to support family relationships (see below)
- Young people at risk of permanent exclusion.
- First time entrants to Youth Justice System.
- Families subject to significant benefit cap impact.

SEND Champions: To support this targeted approach we have identified 7 early help practitioners to receive additional training so they can be SEND Champions within the Locality Teams, so that families who are struggling to manage behaviours and relationships with their children in the home where CDT thresholds are not met are supported to learn and implement effective strategies such as those adopted in schools with the ambition of enabling families to stay together and stay local. We are working closely with the CDT to design and deliver this training and identify families where this support would be most beneficial.

Conversations 4 Change launched on 12th October and Locality Managers will be contacting settings to offer and arrange on-site meetings. Further information about Conversations 4 Change is being distributed to universal settings and across public sites across the borough during October.

Gareth Morgan.
Head of Service,
Early Help and Prevention.