

**Title:** Early Help in Torbay

**Wards Affected:** All Wards

**To:** Health and Wellbeing Board      **On:** 18 June 2015

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report will focus on our current Partnership Early Help provision, with progress made to date, and will discuss future opportunities and plans, with specific reference to the new SWIFT (Social Work Innovation Fund Torbay) project.
- 1.2 The need for an increased focus on early help, intervention and prevention within the family was reinforced by Professor Eileen Munro in her review of child protection<sup>1</sup>. Other supporting reviews include the work of Graham Allen on the benefits of early intervention programmes<sup>2</sup>, Dame Clare Tickell on the Early Years Foundation Stage<sup>3</sup>, and Frank Field's review on poverty<sup>4</sup>. These reviews identified a growing body of evidence of the effectiveness of early help for children and their families. In particular, the emphasis has been on the role that all agencies, including the community and voluntary sector play within an Early Help offer.
- 1.3 With high levels of deprivation in Torbay, and within a climate of increasing austerity, the demand experienced by all Partners for intensive services urgently requires us to provide help and support further up-stream where the cost in both human and financial terms is lower. Families tell us that they have asked for help on so many occasions and been met with no response, or have been told they are asking the wrong service and need to make another request elsewhere – they give up while their problem or issue gets worse. Finally, they present at multiple services with entrenched and complex needs that have

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<sup>1</sup> Professor Eileen Munro, The Munro review of child protection: final report – a child centred system, Department for Education, 2011

<sup>2</sup> Graham Allen, Early Intervention: smart investment, massive savings – the second independent report to Her Majesty's Government, Cabinet Office, July 2011

<sup>3</sup> Dame Claire Tickell, The early years: foundations for life, health and learning, Department for Education, 2011

<sup>4</sup> The foundation years: preventing poor children becoming poor adults, Frank Field, 2010

disrupted their family lives and that require costly interventions. A recent report provided by the Early Intervention Foundation<sup>5</sup> estimates the total spend by late intervention (statutory or acute services) to be 49 million (2014-15) for Torbay with the following breakdown:

Police	3.6 million
NHS	7.3 million
Education	0.9 million
Welfare	7.9 million
Local Gvt	25.8 million
Justice	3.3 million

- 1.4 Figures are based on government returns only, and are therefore likely to be an underestimation of values. Adopting a robust Early Help service will potentially, therefore, make a significant contribution to ongoing savings for Children's Services and Partners.

## **2. The current situation**

- 2.1 Over the past twelve months, much has been done to develop an early help offer to meet the needs of children and families in Torbay. Priorities have been to ensure early identification, good access and effective, co-ordinated support with clear review processes, and to ensure that a full range of services and resources contribute to this as appropriate to meet need and required outcomes. Internal processes have been amended, with a new, separate point of access for support that does not need a statutory service, creating an Early Help front door accessed via an Early Help referral. Our feedback from families and professionals is that, by removing the stigma attached with a 'safeguarding hub referral', far more families needing support are confident to submit a referral. And for safeguarding referrals received into the hub that do not meet a statutory threshold, these are now passed across into Early Help where consent is sought to consider appropriate early intervention. Referrals then not considered to need co-ordinated support are signposted to single agencies or support in the community, and no child or family is left without contact.
- 2.2 As of June 8th, there were 460 families open with a keyworker-lead multi-agency process to support the family with a plan. The rate of referrals with our new processes has increased from 270 in the six months from June to November 2014 to 531 in the six months from December 2014 to May 2015 – an increase of 96%. Our aim is to increase referrals at the Early Help stage and to subsequently see a reduction of referrals into our statutory services by intervening earlier.

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<sup>5</sup> Early Intervention Foundation, Late Spend in Torbay, 2015 (available on request)

2.3 The following are steps we have taken to support the priorities outlined above:

An Early Help strategy has been in place since July 2014, developed to take account of overarching priorities of the Partnership.

The Partnership for Families operational group has been in place since March 2014 to oversee and monitor the strategy, to review access, interventions and to identify opportunities and challenges. It also oversees the Troubled Families initiative.

An Early Help panel runs weekly with good cross-partnership attendance, reviewing new referrals and allocating a lead professional

An Early Help co-ordinator and business support review the incoming referrals and make enquiries to ensure the support is at the right level of need (thresholds).

A new Early Help referral has been developed to replace the SHEF that had been used for all referrals, and an Early Help pathway is in place to support referrals.

Training in the new processes, including the Lead Professional role, the Team around the Family and single plan is being delivered via the TSCB by a multi-disciplinary team.

The TSCB is monitoring Early Help and its effectiveness, with the Partnership for Families group driving performance at an operational level.

360 families have been 'turned around' within our Troubled Families programme, and a further 1,180 will be targeted over the next 5 years.

### **3 Early Help, SWIFT and a model for the future**

3.2 Children's Services successfully bid for funding from the Department for Education under the banner of doing things differently in children's social work. There are three key areas of development within the project:

- the implementation of a Public Service Trust, which offers the opportunity of Partnership co-commissioning towards shared priorities and outcomes;
- targeted delivery within Community Hubs;
- the integration of staff to create a workforce with shared tools and shared family outcomes.

3.3 Integration at the strategic and commissioning level as well as at the delivery level is central to creating an Early Help offer that will begin to stem the flow of ever-increasing referral to our statutory and high cost services.

3.4 The vision within this project is:

*To develop a single, co-ordinated local offer of help and support for and with children and families in Torbay, using shared skills and assets to improve their outcomes.*

3.5 Values for a new Partnership approach are:

*Honest, assured practice based on respectful relationships between professionals and within families, keeping children healthy and safe by utilising and developing the strengths and skills within the community*

- 3.6 At the heart of the project, is the intention to establish community-based Early Help hubs (complementing the Children and Families Community Hub initiated through the Pioneer project). The hubs will create early access to information, support and advice and will use our combined knowledge of the community profile to ensure we target our resources in areas most needing them. Resources and assets from those available universally in the community, and in the voluntary and third sector through to targeted services will form part of the offer available, providing help as early as possible to prevent difficulties escalating. The approach is asset and strengths based and will work with and alongside the community to build resilience. We plan to move our Early Help panel out into the community working within and alongside schools, GP practices, community centres and other family access points as early as September 2015, with the first Hub based in the Hele, Barton and Watcombe area.
- 3.7 Services working across the life-course are indicating a real commitment and enthusiasm for working together to look at a whole family and a whole community rather than an individual in isolation. Adult treatment services, the Probation Service, Early Years, Schools and GPs are just some of the range of agencies/services who have committed to exploring better ways of joining up and of supporting better access to Early Help services, supporting the earlier identification of need that we know will deliver better outcomes.
- 3.8 We are in the process of seconding a group of 'Enablers' from across the Partnership and the Community who will sit within the Panel while working with their home agency to reduce the barriers to an integrated approach to whole family working. The Enablers will additionally create an integration plan, delivered through training from the Horizon Institute, supporting the culture change that this work will require across the Early Help workforce. Common tools and models of working will be identified, and evidence based programmes implemented to ensure resources are being targeted to match need, and that they always build on strengths and skills.

## **4 Summary**

- 4.1 The revised Working Together to Safeguard Children guidance<sup>6</sup> re-emphasises the crucial role of effective early help. It focuses on the collective responsibility of all agencies, including adult services, to identify, assess and provide effective targeted early help services.
- 4.2 It is only through a strong Partnership determination to deliver accessible and effective help for children and families that we will see better outcomes and stem the flow of high cost, acute needs. The work of the Partnership for Families group in developing Early Help in Torbay has laid down a good initial framework on which we can build and embed a stronger, community focused support. Our SWIFT programme gives us opportunities to fund some of this transition, and to lead the way nationally in developing an alternative model for our health and social care work with children and families.

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<sup>6</sup> Working together to safeguard children – a guide to interagency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, Department for Education, 2013