

For General Release

REPORT TO:	CABINET 16 July 2018
SUBJECT:	Progress report on the development of Croydon's Partnership Early Help Strategy
LEAD OFFICER:	Executive Director Children, Families and Education, Eleni Ioannides Interim Head of Early Help, Carolann James
CABINET MEMBER:	Councillor Alisa Flemming, Cabinet Member for Children Young People and Learning
WARDS:	ALL

CORPORATE PRIORITY/POLICY CONTEXT/ AMBITIOUS FOR CROYDON

Croydon's vision is that "*all children and young people in Croydon will be safe, healthy and happy, and will aspire to be the best they can be. The future is theirs*" as identified in the Council's Corporate Plan priorities: [Corporate Plan 2015-18](#) and Croydon's Children's Services Improvement plan as approved by Cabinet in November 2017 which identified the following priorities:

Practice, Priority 1: Improve the quality of practice for children who need help and protection.

People & Performance, Priority 9: Recommission new services as part of the Early Help Strategy

Partnerships, Priority 10: Improve Croydon's Safeguarding Children Board and strengthen partnership working – including partnership engagement in early help

The development of Croydon's Partnership Early Help Strategy and delivery plan addressing the priorities as described above.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report, financial efficiencies are anticipated once the strategy is actually implemented.

FORWARD PLAN KEY DECISION REFERENCE NO.

Not a key decision – information only

The Leader of the Council has delegated to the Cabinet the power to make the decisions set out in the recommendations below:

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cabinet is recommended to:

- 1.1 Note the progress made in development of Croydon's Partnership Early Help Strategy and proposed plan for implementation.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2.1 This report is provided to Cabinet to inform on the progress made in relation to development of the Croydon Partnership Early Help Strategy following Ofsted's Single Inspection Framework (SIF) in the summer of 2017, the DfE Commissioner's report to DfE in December 2017 and the development of Council's Improvement Plan for Children's services agreed in Cabinet in November 2017.

2.2 This Early Help strategy is ambitious and an integral part of Croydon's vision for the future operating model of the Council and wider partnership, which is currently in development and as described below.

2.3 Croydon's is establishing a vision for the future with initial principles for the organisation that will provide for:

- a fundamental change to a system wide approach, with joint pooled resources and pathways operating across organisational boundaries
- an organisational approach that is outcome focused and delivers long term, sustainable solutions for individuals and families to secure independence
- a shift from acute provision to an increase of early intervention and prevention activity
- services that are built around the customer need – from a clear evidence base
- locality based delivery where appropriate

and for residents' initial principles that will ensure:

- Individuals and communities are empowered to be independent and resilient
- Residents will benefit from and embrace more locality-based approaches to service delivery
- Residents possess the skills needed to improve their education and employment prospects
- Residents will be enabled to live more active, healthy and prosperous lives

2.4 Croydon's ambition for our children and young people is that "all children and young people in Croydon, will be safe, healthy and happy and will aspire to be the best they can be. The future is theirs".

2.5 Croydon's ambition for early help is to ensure that we have outstanding universal services ensuring that they support all children to build the capacity to manage the challenges and problems they may encounter in their lives. We understand that and recognise that some children and families will need more help and support and our ambition is to offer the right support, at the right time bound by a common goal to deliver sustained change and improved sustainable outcomes for children.

2.6 Croydon is committed to build resilience, prevent problems from escalating and protect from harm all children from conception to adulthood. The aim of the Croydon Partnership Early Help Strategy is to support children and their families to thrive so that they are able to take full advantage of the opportunities

in Croydon and beyond, and to promote the well being and resilience of families with children in a timely way.

- 2.7 Croydon's Partnership Early Help Strategy, operating model and delivery plan, in development across the partnership, will align with Croydon's vision for the new operating model and enable us to provide a joined up, effective early help offer for children aged 0 to 18 years and their families; which is delivered on a locality, evidence based model through a shared partnership approach to delivering universal and early help services. The Strategy will be implemented, once agreed, in a phased approach.
- 2.8 This change programme is being approached on a balanced cost basis for the Council, although though some transitional funding arrangements are likely to be required.
- 2.9 Croydon's Early Help Strategy is a shared partnership approach to collective delivery of the universal and early help offer and partners will be expected to contribute to funding the offer going forward.

3. PROGRESS UPDATE

3.1 Croydon's ambition for children

- 3.1.1 Croydon's commitment to build resilience, prevent problems from escalating and protect from harm applies to all children from conception to adulthood. The aim of the Croydon Partnership Early Help Strategy is to support these groups to thrive so that they are able to take full advantage of the opportunities in Croydon and beyond, and to promote the wellbeing and resilience of families with children from conception through to 18 years in a timely way, offering high quality, effective supports and services.
- 3.1.2 Outstanding universal services are the foundation of any prevention strategy ensuring that they support all children and their families to build the capacity to manage the challenges and problems they may encounter in their lives. We know that excellent universal services can be the key to change for many children particularly those children who are vulnerable and disadvantaged.
- 3.1.3 We want all children to engage successfully in education, develop skills for employment and choose healthy lifestyles with support from loving families, positive peer networks and good and outstanding schools. We understand and recognise that some children and families will need more help and support. Our ambition is that we offer the right support, at the right time bound by a common goal to deliver sustained change and improved outcomes for children.
- 3.1.4 Where there are concerns about how a child is progressing in terms of their health, welfare, behaviour, progress in learning or any other aspect of their wellbeing, we expect practitioners across the partnership to work together with the children and their families to tackle problems with compassion, purpose and to achieve sustained change for children and prevent problems from escalating to specialist statutory services.

3.2 Review of Early Help Offer

- 3.2.1 In November 2017, a decision was made to commission independent consultants to review the Croydon Early Help offer, support engagement with partners to deliver an all age Early Help Strategy for the Borough and support the Council and partners in delivering the Early Help actions within the Children's Improvement Plan.
- 3.2.2 This review identified that Croydon in responding to the needs of very diverse communities has acknowledged the benefits of Early Help in the early years and made considerable investment into early year provision by establishing the 'Best Start' programme.
- 3.2.3 The Best Start programme, the review reported, had made available substantial provision for children 0-5 years some of which has been coordinated across health and council services.
- 3.2.4 The review noted that there is a paucity of services for children and young people and their families from 6-18 years. This lack of provision is set against a back drop of Croydon having the highest number of young people 10 – 18 years of all the London Boroughs (38,000) of which the Youth Offending Service (YOS) works with over 600 young people annually, the highest volume YOS in London. 900+ offences a year are known to be committed by young people and there are currently 8 active gangs in the Borough. Development of any future service/support needs will be linked to the thematic review of vulnerable young people being led by the Croydon Safeguarding Children Board.
- 3.2.5 The review in analysing the demographics and data in relation to referrals to statutory services identified that each locality (planning) area had similar needs.
- 3.2.6 It was identified that the 'predominant issues' leading to the child and their family being subject of statutory services included domestic abuse, parental mental ill health, parental substance misuse, neglect, emotional and behavioural issues - including gang association - presenting in children and young people and school exclusion.
- 3.2.7 The review was unable to ascertain what 'was the predominant' issue for children and their families open to early help services due to inconsistent recording of this factor on the early help electronic child case records.
- 3.2.8 The review noted the impact on children's social care (CSC) figures with numbers of children in care rising, significant increase in the number of contacts and referrals to CSC and that CSC was the highest referrer to early help supports and services.
- 3.2.9 The review identified that Croydon has many organisations offering early help, but the services are largely operating in isolation and not benefitting from an integrated multi-agency systemic approach which as well as not making economic sense, causes confusion and frustration for families, as where the complexity of their needs rises, children and families have increased single interventions and often numerous workers who assess their situation to be able

to provide support to them.

- 3.2.10 Information sharing between agencies in relation to early help was deemed a challenge and insight was described as limited.
- 3.2.11 Issues around consent was deemed a concern area and the review noted that consent was requested repeatedly at all levels of intervention across early help provisions.
- 3.2.12 The review findings were acknowledged and noted that some of the positive early help work already undertaken by Croydon would provide a foundation from which to build this revised all age Croydon Partnership Early Help strategy.
- 3.2.13 Key findings from this November 2017 commissioned review were shared with staff, partners and other key stakeholders through a series of engagement sessions undertaken during January to March 2018. Feedback from these workshops further inform the development of the Croydon Early Help Strategy.

3.3 Development of the draft Croydon Partnership Early Help Strategy

- 3.3.1 An Early Help Partnership Task and Finish Group, reporting to the Croydon Safeguarding Children Board, was set up as the governance mechanism for this work. The group was chaired by the Corporate Director of People (DCS) and will going forward be chaired by the Executive Director of Children, Families and Education.
- 3.3.2 A first draft of the Croydon Early Help strategy was developed, in consultation with partners and service users, by the independent consultants and in April 2018 the Task and Finish group agreed the first draft Early Help Strategy and proposed delivery plan.
- 3.3.3 This draft Partnership Early Help strategy was considered by the Improvement Board in June 2018. Further work is in train to ensure we have a Croydon Partnership Early Help Strategy that all partners are signed up to collective delivery of the universal and early help offer.
- 3.3.4 In mid July 2018 a partnership Early Help Workshop will take place to ensure:
- clarity regarding mutual expectations of early help,
 - develop a better understanding of what we all have to offer and how it fits into our common vision of early help and universal services and supports collective delivery of our universal help offer across Croydon,
 - Better understand how the partnership early help offer fits into Croydon's new operating model for prevention and early intervention
 - Map Croydon's existing early help and universal services and supports and to identify gaps and overlaps
 - Clear agreement across the partnership of the next steps in terms of finalising Croydon's Partnership Early Help Strategy and delivery plan and implementing the Strategy
- 3.3.5 It is anticipated that the Croydon's Partnership Early Help strategy and delivery

plan will be finalised and considered at Cabinet in September 2018 with an intent, if agreed, to roll this out from Autumn 2018.

- 3.3.6 Partner agencies will also need to agree the Croydon Partnership Early Help Strategy through their governing bodies.
- 3.3.7 All partners will be involved in agreeing the Croydon Partnership Early Help Strategy, delivery plan and operating model.
- 3.3.8 Governance of the Croydon Partnership Early Help Strategy and delivery of universal and early help across Croydon will be under the strategic leadership of the Children and Young People's Partnership Board, which will be aligned to the Croydon Safeguarding Children Board, Improvement Board and report to the Local Strategic Partnership Board and link to the Health and Wellbeing Board.
- 3.3.9 The Children and Young People's Partnership Board will ensure that the Croydon Partnership Early Help Strategy is fully aligned within Croydon's planned new operating model.
- 3.3.10 A phased approach to implementation of the Croydon Partnership Early Help Strategy and operating model is envisaged and a review of this strategy and operating model will take place after twelve months of delivery.
- 3.3.11 Whilst we are finalising the Croydon Partnership Early Help Strategy, operating model and delivery plan we will undertake any necessary restructure of our council early help staff in readiness for delivery of an all age, locality working, partnership early help offer.
- 3.3.12 A communications strategy will be an integral part of the implementation planning ensuring that all staff within the Council, partner agencies (statutory and the voluntary sector) and their staff, communities and children and families fully understand the universal and early help offer, understand the continuum of need and application of this to ensure referrals to early help or specialist services are applied appropriately across this continuum of need.
- 3.3.13 Taking into account the findings from the November 2017 review the partnership will ensure that we have the right supports and services available at the right time for our universal and early help offer to enable reduction in demand on specialist services.
- 3.3.14 Through partnership robust performance monitoring we will develop supports and services within the universal and early help offer to enable us to effectively intervene earlier preventing escalation to specialist services. Additionally, we will further develop our universal and early help support services to take into account locality based needs as well as Borough wide needs.
- 3.3.15 Measuring the difference we make. We want children and families to receive support that meets their needs and makes a difference that is sustained. We will measure the impact of our supports and services across the partnership to ensure that what we do is effective and a good use of resources.

3.3.16 Examples of good practice will be shared across the partnership.

3.3.17 We will continue to review the Croydon Early Help Strategy and operating model iteratively to identify, what if any, further developments, changes or provisions are necessary.

4. CONSULTATION

4.1 The independent consultants undertaking the review of our early help offer consulted with partner agencies and services users as stated above.

4.2 When reviewing the Croydon Partnership Early Help Strategy after twelve months of delivery we will include stakeholders, including children and families in this review

5. FINANCIAL AND RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

5.1 The development of an Early Help Strategy will enable the delivery of both service and financial efficiencies. These efficiencies will arise as a result of effective services being delivered in a timely manner and therefore reducing demand for acute high cost services at a later stage.

5.2 If initial financial investment is required to fully implement the strategy then this can be funded from the transformation fund upon completion and approval of a business case.

5.3 In the medium term it is expected that the implementation of the Early Help Strategy will at least be cost neutral for the Council as the benefits from early intervention reduce demand and offset the higher costs of later intervention.

5.4 Croydon's Early Help Strategy is a shared partnership approach to delivering universal and early help services and partners will be expected to contribute to funding the offer going forward.

5.3 Approved by: Lisa Taylor, Director of Finance, Investment and Risk

6. COMMENTS OF THE COUNCIL SOLICITOR AND MONITORING OFFICER

6.1 The Solicitor to the Council comments that whilst there are no legal implications to this change programme as described in this report, there is a duty to comply with the direction of the Secretary of State following the June 2017 Ofsted inspection of children's services."

6.2 Approved by: Jacqueline Harris-Baker, Director of Law and Monitoring Officer

7. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT

- 7.1 In order to offer an evidence based whole family approach to a Partnership Early Help offer there will need to be a number of changes to Croydon's early help teams existing jobs and working practices to enable a locality based, partnership early help offer for children aged 0 to 18 and their families. There will be three new posts established to service lead the three localities provisions. There are no anticipated redundancies.
- 7.2 A thirty day consultation with staff and unions will be undertaken to consider the changes to jobs, working practices and creation of new posts.
- 7.3 A workforce development strategy to ensure a skilled and committed workforce with robust management oversight is planned for in the implementation planning.
- 7.4 Approved by: Deborah Calliste, HR People, Department Lead on behalf of the Director of Human Resources

8. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 8.1 Equalities and diversity considerations are key elements of universal, early help and statutory service practice. It is imperative that all supports and services for children, young people and their families are sensitive and responsive to age, disability, ethnicity, faith or belief, gender, identity, language, race and sexual orientation.
- 8.2 Croydon has a diverse population of children and young people. Children and young people from minority ethnic groups in Croydon account for 57%, compared with 30% in the country as a whole. The proportion of children and young people with English as an additional language across primary schools is 44% (the national average is 18%)
- 8.3 The Croydon Partnership Early Help Strategy is aimed at children aged 0 to 18 years whereas the current offer is significantly weighted towards children aged 0 to 5 years.

9. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- 9.1 There are no direct implications contained in this report.

10. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT

- 10.1 It is envisaged that by delivering an all age Partnership Early Help Strategy working to intervene earlier and prevent problems presenting to social care or higher tier statutory services that in time we will see an impact on the reduction of crime and disorder.

11. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS/PROPOSED DECISION

For information only.

12. OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

12.1 None.

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APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT: None

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- [Ofsted single Inspection of Croydon's children's services and review of the LSCB June 2017](#)
- [Ofsted monitoring visit of Croydon's children's services March 2018](#)
- [Croydon Children's Improvement Plan November 2017](#)
- [Croydon Corporate Plan 2015-2018](#)