

Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Wednesday, 27 February 2019

REPORT TITLE:	Early Help – Community Matters
REPORT OF:	Director for Children's Services

REPORT SUMMARY

This report provides the committee with an overview of the new Community Matters initiative which has been established to provide early help for children, young people and families in Wirral.

The Community Matters initiative supports the following Wirral Plan Pledges:

- Children Are Ready for School
- Vulnerable Children Reach their Full Potential
- Young People are Ready for Work and Adulthood

The Community Matters initiative affects all Wards within the borough.

This report does not relate to a key decision.

RECOMMENDATION/S

Members are asked to note the report and to support the Community Matters initiative.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 To ensure members of the Children and Families Overview & Scrutiny Committee are fully informed on the development of the new early help offer and provision.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 Not applicable.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 **Early help** means taking action to support a child, young person or their family as soon as a problem emerges. It can be required at any stage in a child's life, from pre-birth to adolescence, and applies to any problem or need that the family can't deal with alone. Early help can lead to better outcomes for children, prevent problems escalating or overwhelming families, create social mobility and support communities to thrive.
- 3.2 It is an ambition of Wirral Council and its partners to make Wirral great for children, young people and their families. Children and families need to feel a sense of belonging in the communities where they live, to be able to access help from those around them in the least intrusive and most accessible way. Therefore, we are committed to changing the way in which early help is delivered by investing in voluntary, community, faith, and educational organisations. With the right support, families and communities can collaborate to achieve outcomes which are mutually beneficial.
- 3.3 Community Matters seeks to create the right conditions for community-based early help to thrive. This includes:
- Revitalising the voluntary, community and faith sector by creating a vibrant and visible network of providers;
 - Providing support to children and families which is straight-forward and effective, easy to engage with and not constrained by overwhelming processes;
 - Engaging all stakeholders in the process of developing a long-term approach to early help which is sustainable, responsive to need, proactive in delivery, and is owned by communities.

Working as a partnership, we seek to use the Community Matters initiative to build capacity, develop skills, maximise existing resources and achieve a collective impact which will improve the daily-lived experience of our children, families and residents. The Community Matters programme has an initial timeframe of January 2019 to March 2021.

3.4 The Community Matters initiative has been developed, using existing resource differently, to provide a more engaging early help offer through commissioned services. Pre-Community Matters, the Local Authority employed an Early Help Team consisting of 1.0 FTE Partnerships Manager, 3.4 FTE Administrators, 3.0 FTE Advanced Social Work Practitioners and 8.0 FTE Social Workers. The Early Help Team budget was approximately £670,000.

3.5 The duties undertaken by the Early Help Team were:

- To publish an early help offer;
- To host quarterly early help networking events;
- To maintain and manage the information systems, recording all early help referrals and casework activity;
- To provide consultations and advice to professionals delivering early help to children and families;
- To triage requests for service, signposting to appropriate provision; and
- To support organisations to participate in early help.

The Early Help Team did not undertake any casework for children and families.

3.6 In early July 2018, the decision to develop the Community Matters initiative was taken by Children's Services Senior Leadership Team based on the following considerations:

- Schools were repeatedly reporting increased pressure caused by having to lead on the delivery of early help casework;
- Partners were reporting a lack of early help provision;
- Relationships with the voluntary, community and faith sector had significantly diminished;
- The Integrated Front Door was under significant pressure, receiving 1,800 to 2,000 requests for service per month;
- There were in excess of 50 social work vacancies within Children's Social Care and 11 qualified Social Workers within the Early Help Team who did not case-hold.

On 31st July 2018, the Social Workers from the Early Help Team were re-allocated into frontline teams within Children's Social Care. At the same time, the Administrators were re-allocated into existing vacancies within Children's Services. The Partnership Manager post was retained to provide oversight of early help and the Community Matters programme. There were no redundancies caused by this change. A budget of £650,000 was retained to finance the new initiative.

3.7 Implementing the programme took several months, with the timeline as follows:

July 2018	Early Help Team members re-allocated within Children's Services
September 2018	Stimulating the market event and provider engagement activity
October 2018	Tenders live on the chest
November 2018	Submission of bids and short-listing panel
December 2018	Contracts awarded
January 2019	Community Matters went live

3.8 There are three distinct parts of Community Matters now being provided as follows:

Lot	Description	Annual Cost	Provider
Lot 1	<p>Co-ordination of early help- Revitalising the voluntary, community and faith sector by creating a vibrant and visible network of providers through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - publishing the early help offer - re-launching the Link Forum (network for VCF providers) - hosting quarterly networking events - triaging requests for service and signposting children and families to support - allocating families to Lot 2 providers for casework support - maintaining information system, recording all early help activity and casework 	£100,000	Home-Start Wirral
Lot 2a	<p>Delivery of early help support- Providing support to children and families which is straight-forward and effective, easy to engage with and not constrained by overwhelming processes.</p> <p>To work with 120 families (annually), ensuring each family has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a lead worker - an early help assessment - an early help plan - a recorded outcome and closure summary 	£60,000 per lot, totalling £360,000	Fender Community Hub
Lot 2b			Caritas
Lot 2c			WEB
Lot 2d			WIRED
Lot 2e			WIRED
Lot 2f			To be confirmed
Lot 3	<p>Development of early help- Engaging all stakeholders in the</p>	£150,000	Capacity (Public Services Lab)

	<p>process of developing a long-term approach to early help which is sustainable, responsive to need, proactive in delivery, and is owned by communities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stakeholder engagement - Capacity building - Evaluation- what works - Collective impact modelling - Launch a new model by April 1st 2021 		
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3.9 Lot 2f will be awarded and in operation by 1st April 2019. This contract was not awarded as the panel were seeking an organisation who could provide a whole-family mental health and wellbeing service, as this is an area of high demand.

3.10 In addition to the successful providers outlined in the table above, we are also entering into a Community Matters contract with Safer Wirral Hub. Safer Wirral Hub submitted a very strong bid to work with 240 families per year delivering support through a formal domestic abuse programme. Safer Wirral Hub proposed to use the funding to employ a small delivery team. It was agreed by the panel that this would be beneficial to children and families in Wirral and meet a specific need, however, there was no need to enter into a financial arrangement as the staff required by Safer Wirral Hub could be provided through the re-allocation of existing resources within Children's Services. Therefore, an additional 240 families will receive a service from Safer Wirral Hub as part of Community Matters but payment will be made 'in kind' by providing staff.

3.11 Community Matters is already gathering momentum with other provision now been linked under the initiative, this includes:

- The Feeding Wallasey project- initiated by Wallasey Constituency Committee, this will be delivered through Community Matters. The infrastructure to award and monitor contracts will be provided through Community Matters allowing the maximum amount of funding to be invested in service delivery;
- Wirral Crucial Crew- a Police-led child safety programme will be delivered to over 350 pupils across a range of schools;
- Reducing Parental Conflict- the Partnerships Manager overseeing Community Matters has successfully acquired funding to deliver awareness raising events, multi-agency training and early help support to reduce parental conflict. This is a partnership with the Department of Work and Pensions;

- A pilot project with Birkenhead Park Forest School is under consideration. This would target a number of disadvantaged families where parenting capacity could be improved through learning to spend time together outdoors.

3.12 Community Matters will provide a wider and more active early help offer in comparison to the former Early Help Team provision. The benefits of the new arrangements are summarised as follows:

- All co-ordination of the early help offer has been maintained and is now delivered through Home-Start Wirral rather than the previous Local Authority team;
- The Link Forum has been re-established;
- 960 families will receive an early help support package, which will significantly reduce pressure on other services such as schools;
- Those agencies delivering the early help support packages are receiving payment;
- Pressure on the Integrated Front Door will significantly decrease as families and partners are able to contact Community Matters rather than directing all requests for service to Children's Services;
- Processes have been streamlined to make access to and provision of support much simpler;
- Investment and capacity building with the wider partnership and VCF sector;
- Widescale engagement and consultation with residents and stakeholders over 2 years to develop a collective impact model for early help.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no financial implications as the new initiative is being delivered within the existing financial envelope.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The procurement of Community Matters programme has followed the existing procedural and legal framework in line with Council standards and expectations.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: ICT, STAFFING AND ASSETS

6.1 As described in Section 3, this is a re-allocation of existing resource.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 Risks to contract delivery are managed through the Council's existing contract compliance monitoring and performance schedules. Quality assurance of provision is provided through the Partnerships Manager's role.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 During the period of July to September 2018, consultation and engagement activities and events took place with all stakeholders, including children, young people and families. Governance has been provided through Children's Services Senior Leadership Team, with Wirral Safeguarding Children Board receiving regular reports.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Through consultation and engagement with stakeholders it was agreed that an impact review of equality was not required due to both the regulations for providing an early help offer and the framework associated with the Council's procurement processes.

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SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Not applicable	Not applicable