WIRRAL

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 20 October 2020

REPORT TITLE:	EARLY HELP MODEL
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

REPORT SUMMARY

This report provides the Children, Young People and Education Committee with an overview of the developing early help model. It details insight work undertaken in the first year of the Community Matters initiative, describes the emerging model and its key components, relationship to the wider children's services system and outlines the year two work plan and pilot activity.

The early help model seeks to contribute to the following priorities of Wirral Council's Plan 2025:

- Working for brighter futures for our children, young people and their families by breaking the cycle of poor outcomes and raising the aspirations of every child in Wirral.
- Working for safe and pleasant communities where our residents feel safe, and where they want to live and raise their families.

This matter affects residents across the borough.

This report does not relate to a key decision.

RECOMMENDATION/S

The Children, Young People and Education Committee is requested to:

1. Note the progress made since January 2019, through the Community Matters initiative, to develop an innovative new early help model.

2. Support the approach and ongoing developmental work and pilot activity.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

1.1 The Community Matters initiative is a key component of the medium-term strategy to reduce demand for statutory services whilst improving outcomes and the daily-lived experience of children, young people and families in Wirral. Providing a strong early help offer is an invest to save approach that builds capacity and resilience within families and communities.

1.2 Community Matters launched in January 2019, with a commitment to deliver a new early help model in April 2021. Following 18 months of meaningful activity, momentum is gathering, there is commitment from external partners both in kind and funding to further develop the approach, therefore support of senior leaders for this agenda is important.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

2.1 Not to support the approach and ongoing developmental work would limit the opportunity to maximise the resource within families and communities for early help capacity building and would negatively impact on co-ordination of community-based support. Not to support an early help model would lead to an increase in demand for statutory services and increase in costs for wider public services.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 In June 2018, the Children's Services directorate was restructured, establishing an Early Help & Prevention Service led by an Assistant Director. Two priorities were agreed for Early Help & Prevention:

Priority 1. To deliver high quality, cost effective prevention services which reduce demand for children's social care and stop children becoming looked after

Priority 2. Optimise the total resource in the system for early help

3.2 To deliver priority 1 a full-scale service review was undertaken, investing an additional £650k into the Local Authority's Early Help & Prevention Services, which included Early Years and Children's Centres, the Integrated Front Door, Targeted Family Support, Family Group Conferencing, Edge of Care Support for infants and adolescents, Contextual Safeguarding Service and the Community Matters early help provision.

3.3 On 17 March 2020, a report was presented to the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee detailing the progress and successes achieved for priority 1. The report noted a reduction in demand for Children's Social Care, with contacts in 2019-20 reducing to 11,766 from 14,900 the previous year, and the rate of Child in Need per 10,000 reducing to 335.9 in 19-20 from 398.8 the previous year. The report also noted positive feedback on preventative services from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), and Ofsted inspection which stated, "early help is making a positive difference to children."

3.4   This report focuses on the progress made for priority 2, optimising the total resource in the system for early help.

3.5   The children's system can be described in a number of ways, the most common being through a *threshold of need* model. Whilst the threshold model is helpful to local authority services in describing level of need and organising its service provision, it is less sophisticated in describing how families view and seek help. The following diagram describes the system from the child and family's perspective:
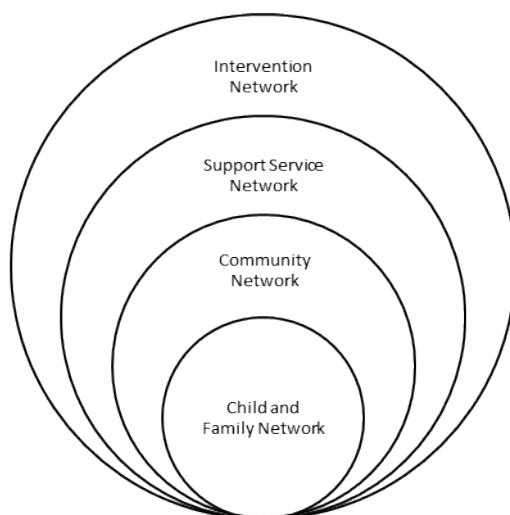
3.6   Overlaying Children's Services onto this model would show Children's Social Care in the outer ring, *Intervention Network,* and the Early Help & Prevention Service in the *Support Service Network.* The two inner rings, *Community Network* and *Child and Family Network,* are the areas in which we seek to influence through the design and development of a new early help model and approach. It is within these two inner spheres that we aim to optimise the resource and capacity to meet need as early as possible.

3.7   There are three basic assumptions in this model which are worth noting. Firstly, the closer the ring to the individual the more comfortable they feel in asking for and accepting help, and secondly, the closer the ring to the individual the lesser the cost to public services. The third assumption, which is critical to reducing demand, is that the stronger we make each of the inner rings, the less need there is for the outer rings.

3.8   In January 2019 the Community Matters initiative was launched which has focused on the workings and interdependencies of all four rings and how to reimagining early help. Children's Services have collaborated with *Capacity: The Public Services Lab*, who were commissioned to work with key stakeholders across Wirral to develop an innovative and asset-based early help model which can be implemented by 01 April 2021. The progress to date and emerging model will be described in this report.

3.9   Progress and achievement in Year 1
        Children's Services and *Capacity: The Public Services Lab* agreed a work plan for Year 1 which focused on four areas: engagement; infrastructure; readiness; and

service design (Appendix 1- Year 1 Discovery Work Plan). Achievement against the goals is as follows:

3.9.1   Engagement

Goal: Shared understanding of what stakeholders need and want from an early help model

Achieved: Through workshops, focus groups, structured and semi-structured interviews with professionals and volunteers from across agencies and engagement with approximately 450 Wirral families, a findings report, *Why Community Matters*, was published (Appendix 2- Why Community Matters report). A webinar to launch the report was hosted on 09 June 2020, opened by Cllr Tom Usher, Cabinet Member for Children, Families & Education. The webinar was followed by two virtual workshops, *Continuing the Conversation*, which were attended by over 100 professionals and volunteers from across Wirral.

The key elements for an early help model, agreed by all stakeholders were:

Empower me   Be local to me

Communicate   Support my
with me   whole family

Inspire me   Connect me

3.9.2   **Infrastructure**

Goal: Co-designed proposal that outlines how Wirral MBC systems and processes will support people as early and effectively as possible

Achieved: Extensive research has been completed on national and international models for infrastructure, identifying components for digital platforms and effective communications. A work plan for year 2 is underway featuring activity to rebrand and create a 'new language' for early help, communications strategy, kitemarking to create 'one system' and test alternative procurement approaches. (Full details in Appendix 3- Next Steps summary).

3.9.3   **Readiness**

Goal: Motivated, robust network of partners and providers ready to pilot some new approaches.

Achieved: The number of partners delivering through the Community Matters initiative has doubled in 12 months. For the most recent Community Matters tendering exercise 20 local VCSE organisations applied to join the initiative. This demonstrates a growing network of partners and providers ready to deliver new approaches. In addition, 6 local VCSE organisations benefitted from leadership development from *Capacity: The Public Service Lab* and *Clore Social Leadership Programme*.

Goal: Shifts in Wirral MBC commissioning processes ensure VCSEs can sit at the heart of service delivery

Achieved: Working closely with Community Matters delivery partners to learn from their experience in year 1, we have made variations to existing contracts to reduce bureaucracy and give providers greater ability to maximise their organisation's strengths in year 2. This has involved delivery partners collaborating to develop and implement a new outcomes framework, based on family experience and family reporting rather than 'head counting'. In addition, efforts to shift commissioning processes were positively demonstrated in the recent Family Coaches pilot, which saw an end-to-end process from funding being awarded from the National Lottery to Family Coaches starting their role, taking only 6 weeks.

3.9.4 **Service Design**

Goal: Early Help prototypes, co-designed with stakeholders and partners, ready for piloting in Year 2

Achieved: A number of pilots are underway, including the *Childhood Offer* in Cradle to Career, the *Family Coaches* pilot, new outcomes framework, testing of self-directed services and plans for testing rapid commissioning and self-reflection tools in place.
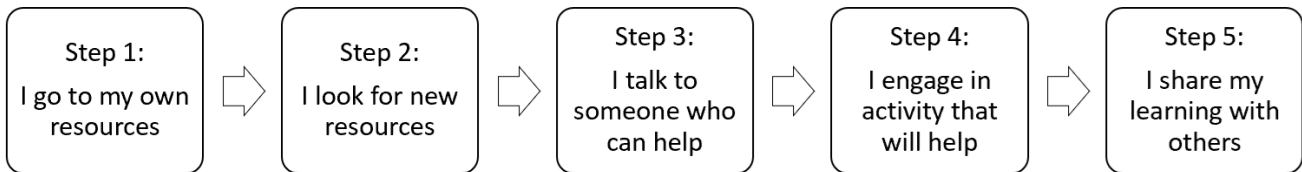
3.10 **The Emerging Model**

The most important piece of learning from Year 1 has been that stakeholders perceive early help as 'a service', something that is 'accessed' and 'delivered to' children and families, rather than something that we can all do. Stakeholders perceive early help as sitting in the third ring, *Support Services Network.* It is the intention of the new model to push early help into the inner rings of *Child and Family Network* and *Community Network*, through a model based on influencing behaviour change.

3.11 The emerging model aims to help families to help themselves, and is grounded in the principles defined by Hilary Cottam in *'Radical Help: How We Can Remake the Relationships Between Us and Revolutionise the Welfare State',* (Virago Press, London, 2018):

20th Century Welfare	21st Century Radical Help
Fix the problem	Grow the good life
Manage need	Develop capability
Transaction culture	Above all relationships

Audit money	Connect multiple forms of resource
Contain risk	Create possibility
Closed/targeted	Open: take care of everyone

3.12   As a starting position, the new model considers how we would want people to behave when they have a problem to resolve.

Step 1: I go to my own resources	→	Step 2: I look for new resources	→	Step 3: I talk to someone who can help	→	Step 4: I engage in activity that will help	→	Step 5: I share my learning with others

3.12.1 Step 1: The first step we take in working out a problem is to apply our existing learning and experience, to ask ourselves "What do I know about this?", "Have I experienced this before? What did I do then, and how did that work out for me?" This relies on previous learning and previous experiences.

3.12.2 Step 2: The next step to take is to look for new information- we 'google it'. We use the internet, books, magazines, online forums, even instruction manuals to increase our knowledge and work out how to solve the problem.

3.12.3 Step 3: Getting advice from someone who we think will have knowledge and experience, someone we trust and is available to us, is the next step. They may share experience, provide new resources or introduce us to a new activity.

3.12.4 Step 4: Taking part in an activity, whether it's a learning opportunity, programme or support service requires a greater commitment on behalf of the individual, and therefore is dependent on a belief that the activity will help. That belief is strengthened when it comes via a recommendation from someone who has benefitted from it.

3.12.5 Step 5: Sharing experience and learning is beneficial to the person for cementing their experience, helps others, and creates peer or community support structures that lead to more sustainable outcomes.

3.13   An important advantage of this approach is that it gives control and choice to the individual, which, as we know from insight work, is important. It is unsurprising that feedback confirms people do not want to 'be referred', 'be assessed', 'be measured against criteria' or added to a waiting list. Another advantage is that help can begin immediately.

3.14   It is our intention that the emerging model will contain the elements required to enable this approach. For each step, we have identified key elements to test and put into place. Where there are financial implications, a note is added detailing where funding has been sourced from to support activity.

3.14.1 Step 1: This step relies on previous learning and experience. We can influence learning in two key areas and, although we cannot influence previous experience, we can provide a tool for people to reflect on previous experience.

- ✓ *Curriculum for Life* (developed through the Youth Offer) which prepares young people for adulthood. The *Curriculum for Life* will blend face-to-face activities, delivered through schools and youth provision, with an online resource bank accessible at any time

- ✓ Early Parenting Programmes (developed through the *1001 Critical Days Offer*) which enhances parents' learning through pregnancy to age 2. The *1001 Critical Days Offer* will blend face-to-face activities, delivered across Early Childhood Services, with an online resource bank accessible at any time

- ✓ A self-reflection tool to assess the problem, review previous learning and experiences, and consider current options. This tool will be available online so that it is accessible at any time (developing with funding from the Troubled Families Service Transformation Grant)

3.14.2 Step 2: This step relies on people being able to find useful information easily, such as the resources referred to above and those that community organisations have to offer.

- ✓ Developing a beta-version early help website, in collaboration with community partners, that shares great resources and information relating to specific family needs, experiences, and times of change (developing with funding from the Troubled Families Service Transformation Grant)

- ✓ An early help app which offers knowledge, tools and connection to peer group (developing with funding from the Troubled Families Service Transformation Grant)

- ✓ Linking the Youth Offer website and Youth Matters app to the beta-version early help website (developing through the Youth Offer website funding)

3.14.3 Step 3: This is a step in which the breadth of choice available to people needs to be fully optimised. In a non-professional context, friends, neighbours, community leaders, peer support and peer forums have a very important role and bring the inner rings of the model, *Family and Friends Network* and *Community Network* to life. Within the professional context, we know from the insight work that people have great trust in their GPs, schools and local voluntary organisations, readily turning to them for advice.

- ✓ A kitemarking system for organisations to be part of the one-system approach to early help, using the behaviour model and coaching approach (developing with funding from the Troubled Families Service Transformation Grant)

- ✓ A referral-free online and telephone coaching delivered by voluntary organisations to encourage people to think through their challenges and come up with their own solutions (developing through National Lottery funding)

- ✓ Learning from the impact of *Community Champions* and the *Cradle to Career* programme (joint funding approach between Wirral Council, the Steve Morgan Foundation, Shine Trust, and Right to Succeed)

✓ A digital/paper tool that a family owns and shares with others to articulate their needs with having to re-tell their story (developing with funding from the Troubled Families Service Transformation Grant)

3.14.4 Step 4: Wirral benefits from an incredibly active voluntary, community and faith sector. To maximise opportunities for families, it is our intention to improve awareness of the many activities available in Wirral that support families to thrive, whilst testing new solutions to key gaps outlined by residents.

✓ Developing a beta-version early help website, linked to Live Well, Info Bank, Local Offer, Youth Matters, My Child Can and other relevant sites to provide information on activities (developing with funding from the Troubled Families Service Transformation Grant)

✓ Seed more peer-based support groups (developing with funding from the Violence Reduction Unit)

✓ Co-ordinate the activity of Wirral Youth Collective, as part of the Youth Offer

✓ Move appropriate programmes online (those which transferred online during Covid-19 lockdown and where testing demonstrates this is effective)

✓ Development of a *My Community Matters* funding approach which enables commissioning of activity to meet needs in local areas, bringing people, providers, funders and philanthropists together, with structures and permissions to act (piloting through Tudor Trust funding)

✓ Community Matters provision is self-directed only, no referrals

3.14.5 Step 5: This step requires meaningful sharing of power and decision making so that children and families can play a fundamental role in the design, commissioning and delivery of local services.

✓ A community training programme that shares essential coaching and empowerment practices with people and organisations that support others in their community (developing through National Lottery funding)

✓ Take up and impact of the *My Community Matters* small grants pot, offering grass-roots community groups access to funding and set-up support to launch new peer-based groups and activities that support local families to thrive (piloting through Tudor Trust funding)

3.15 **The emerging model in relation to Children's Services**
In the emerging model, which seeks to optimise and mobilise resource within the *Child and Family Network* and *Community Network*, the Local Authority needs to provide backbone support. This will be achieved to some extent by the development of infrastructure as described above in section 3.14, but will also rely on the relationship between some parts of the Local Authority Children's Services and the community, particularly the Children's Centres, Early Childhood Services

and the Youth Offer. Those parts of the Children's Services directorate will be branded in line with the *Community Network* and early help offer.

3.16   It is intended that the Children's Centres will be re-visioned as Family Wellbeing Centres, providing a central point for the people, Children's Services and community organisations to merge. The Early Childhood Service will continue to focus on under-5s, but the buildings will provide opportunity for collaborative delivery across 'people services' for all parts of the directorate and extending to other Council departments as appropriate. Seacombe Children's Centre, which provides a birthing suite, access to health services, a social supermarket, community café, base for voluntary organisations, a shared garden, and more recently, access to library facilities, is a good blueprint to follow.

3.17   The Children's Centres currently benefit from Advisory Groups which have community, partner and parent representation. These Advisory Boards have access to a small amount of funding for local projects. This approach would be extended to create a Community Matters fund in each locality which is used to provide rapid response to meet need at a local level, and to fund grass roots community groups to lead on events and activities in their area. Currently the Community Matters funding is centralised and funds support for 900 families per year.

3.18   It is important to note the case-holding parts of Early Help & Prevention Services which will remain in the *Support Services Network:* Targeted Family Support, Edge of Care for adolescents and infants, Family Group Conferencing, Contextual Safeguarding Service, and Youth Justice Service. These services will continue to require referral to ensure that the interface between them and Children's Social Care is strong, providing robust arrangements for step-down and preventing need for statutory intervention and children becoming looked after.

3.19   **Challenges presented by the emerging model**
There are two very significant challenges to consider when implementing this self-help model. The first being that the model relies upon the individual wanting to make a change. Every day there are contacts to the Integrated Front Door, which when assessed as not being in need of intervention from Children's Social Care are directed to early help services, which are declined by the parent, family, child or young person.

3.20   As part of the Family Coaching pilot, funded by the National Lottery, we will test out 'Choice Champions'. The Choice Champion will engage with families who were referred to Children's Services but did not meet the threshold, to discuss why they were referred, find out from the family what they are struggling with, coach them through the behaviour model, and promote the self-reflection tool and online resources, giving choice and control back to the individual and family.

3.21   The model aims to influence how people behave when they are faced with a problem or need help. We are conscious that more challenging may be influencing how professionals and organisations behave when people need help. Currently there is a culture of 'fixing', 'signposting' and 'referring on' rather than listening and helping people to help themselves. This is a challenge which will require time, workforce development and system-leadership from the *Partnership for Children*

and Families. Implementing the model will provide a solid platform to build on, and it is anticipated it will take 3-5 years for this to be fully embedded.

3.22 **<u>Continuous Learning and Growth of Community Matters</u>**
A report on learning and impact will be reported to the Children, Families and Education Committee on 11 March 2021. This will include evidence from:
- Evaluation of the collective impact tool
- One-to-one interviews with parents, children, young people and partners
- Satisfaction surveys
- Analysis of Children's Services data
- National Lottery programme evaluation
- Report of Capacity: The Public Services Lab Impact Team

Learning will continue to shape development of the model.

3.23 Working with *Capacity: The Public Services Lab*, we are developing a prospectus to present to government bodies interested in innovation, funders, collaborators and philanthropists, extending the invitation to be part of this innovative approach to delivering early help to children and families in 2021 and future years.

3.24 The aspects of this approach which will be of most interest to external bodies, and thereby increase the likelihood of funding contribution will be:

- ✓ No referrals as the model is self-directed
- ✓ No thresholds as available to anyone who faces a problem
- ✓ No waiting lists as people can start their self-reflection/plan immediately
- ✓ Co-produced with people and developed in response to their experiences an
- ✓ Aligned with Asset Based Community Development and Community Wealth Building Strategies
- ✓ Suitable to extend to adults without children- early help for adults
- ✓ Potential to reduce demand for statutory services
- ✓ Potential to reduce waiting lists as people source alternative help and professionals cease making automatic referrals through lack of other options

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report. The existing Community Matters initiative is funded through the Early Help & Prevention budget. This budget has been increased by securing additional funding from the National Lottery (£100k), the Tudor Trust (£35k), Violence Reduction Unit (£38k), and utilising £203k from the Troubled Families Service Transformation Grant.

4.2 The report outlines a number of pilots, which if to become business as usual, would be funded by altering existing resource, or through longer-term external funding which is being sought from external bodies.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report. Where the report details new approaches to procurement and commissioning, this has been compliant with the requirements of Council Procurement processes.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

6.1   There is a requirement for the development of digital platforms to deliver the new model. These are being developed in partnership with the appropriate Council services.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

7.1   Establishing the new model within the agreed timescale and allocated funding requires effective collaboration between Wirral Council and *Capacity: The Public Services Lab.* A robust contract monitoring arrangement is in place, complemented by fortnightly meetings between lead delivery officers and regular communication between Directors.

7.2   It is necessary to acknowledge the current financial pressures facing the Council and its partners as a risk. Any future funding discussion must consider cost-benefit analysis and the need for invest to save approaches.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

8.1   As detailed in section 3.9**,** through workshops, focus groups, structured and semi-structured interviews with professionals and volunteers from across agencies and engagement with approximately 450 Wirral families, a findings report, *Why Community Matters*, was published (Appendix 2- Why Community Matters report). The webinar was followed by two virtual workshops, *Continuing the Conversation*, which were attended by over 100 professionals and volunteers from across Wirral.

8.2   An online forum has been established to continue engagement with children, parents and families. This will continue throughout the duration of the model development, leading to the establishment of a *Families Forum*, which will be a sub-group of the Partnership for Children and Families.

8.3   Parents were involved in the selection panels for commissioning the Family Coaches pilot, which took place in August 2020.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1   Wirral Council has a legal requirement to make sure its policies, and the way it carries out its work, do not discriminate against anyone. An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed for the early help model.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

10.1   It is anticipated that the new early help model will contribute to reduced greenhouse gases and emissions of CO_2. By increasing local and virtual access to services there will be less requirement for staff and service users to travel. Online tools and resources will reduce the use of paper. Commissioning arrangements for Community Matters providers require that they operate services that contribute positively to environment and climate issues.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1- Year 1 Discovery Work Plan
Appendix 2- Why Community Matters report
Appendix 3- Next Steps summary
Appendix 4- Elements of the Early Help Model

BACKGROUND PAPERS
Inspection of Children's Social Care Services Report, Ofsted, published 29th July 2019

Hilary Cottam (2018) *Radical Help: How We Can Remake the Relationships Between Us and Revolutionise the Welfare State*, (Virago Press, London)

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Children and Families Overview & Scrutiny Committee	24 February 2019
Children and Families Overview & Scrutiny Committee	17 March 2020