

FOR PUBLICATION

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET

7 July 2022

Report of the Executive Director for Children's Services

TRANSITIONS (EARLY HELP) – DIRECTION OF TRAVEL

1 Divisions Affected

1.1 County-wide Service

2 Key Decision

2.1 This is not a key decision

3 Purpose

3.1 This report seeks Cabinet support to extend the Transitions Service on a time-limited basis (for 22 months from 1st October 2022 to 31st July 2024), funded through the accumulated supporting families reserve; whilst a co-produced partnership Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy is designed and developed, and further work is undertaken to ascertain what the future partnership delivery model will be.

3.2 The Service have delivered some significant success, despite operating and delivery during the height of the pandemic. It is clear however, that the current model requires further development.

3.3. An Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy is required to strengthen and develop the current model of early help, build on successes and drive partnership working and accountability as a whole system.

3.4 We are recommending that the current model be extended whilst that strategy work is undertaken (to cease at this point would not be in the best interests of partners, children and young people and families)

- 3.5 A time-limited extension of the current service will enable:
- Continuity of support to strategic partners in relation to strengthening early help, while a new multi-agency partnership model is developed
 - Continuity of successful provision of support to young people aged 16-19 years in relation to employment, education and training
 - Early help advisers will continue to model 'Team around the child meetings'
 - Further work will continue to develop 'The Community Directory'

4 Information and Analysis

- 4.1 Cabinet agreed the original set up of the service on 31st January 2019 (see Appendix 2) as a result of a review and The Transition Service was established in September 2019 originally planned for a fixed term of 3 years. Some of the original remit has been met, however, largely due to the pandemic and the impact this had on the council delivering services and on partner agencies (particularly health) not all of the original areas of the plan have been delivered against.
- 4.2 Whilst there was a clear rationale for the service being developed the required outcomes need to be crystalised with an accountability framework secured via the design and development of a multi-agency co-produced Early Intervention and Prevention Partnership Strategy (which we will lead the development of).
- 4.3 The basis for developing the Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy is set out in The Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018), *'all agencies working with children and young people in Derbyshire are expected to provide early help at the earliest opportunity before requesting targeted support from frontline Children's Services'*. Our partnership protocol is set out in the Derby City and Derbyshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Threshold Document (see Appendix 9).
- 4.4 Please note: the Council continues to provide early help teams embedded into the early help and safeguarding service to provide targeted support to those children and families who need a higher level of support in the children's social system, and that are below the statutory social care threshold for social work involvement. This graduated response to vulnerability enables more children to have their needs met at the lowest level of intervention.

- 4.5 The Early Help Advisors support partners through modelling to convene and act as lead professionals in Team Around the Family meetings and offer advice on tools to use to elicit 'the voice of the child' when undertaking direct work, support with understanding and using assessments around children at risk of exploitation, and how to assess neglect or compromised parenting with the 'Graded Care Profile'.
- 4.6 The Transition Team has also supported the development of sustainable communities. The Youth and Community Engagement Workers are able to support the setting up of community groups, support them to access funding, undertaking risk assessments etc. The staff have also worked on the development of the Community Directory.
- 4.7 The Community Directory has been developed by the Transition team and is a tool which partners can use to connect families to the appropriate support at the earliest opportunity without the need for them to refer on to specialist or targeted services. It is also designed to be used by families to access their own support - so it offers information which is easily accessible and leads to sustainable support.
- 4.8 Within the Transition Team sits the Employment and Education Team. They fulfil Derbyshire's statutory duty to monitor 16-18-year-olds who are not in education, employment or training, or whose educational provision is unknown (NEET).

5 The impact of COVID-19 on the Transitions Team and activities to build the sufficiency of Early Help

- 5.1 It was agreed in the original cabinet paper of January 2019 to fund the Transition Team from the accumulated Supporting Families reserve for a period of 3 years to 30 September 2022.
- 5.2 The Transition Team was only operational for 6 months when the COVID-19 pandemic began, initially resulting in all team members working from home and being isolated from one another and their managers. Also, the work of the Transitions team was redirected to support the pandemic, including the work of partners also affected.
- 5.3 As the country began on the road to recovery from COVID, staff from the Transition Team were directed to work with frontline services in

supporting Derbyshire residents. Early Help Advisors and Youth and Community Engagement Workers were deployed to support the distribution of medication to vulnerable and shielding residents. Staff also worked closely with several food banks to provide hot meals to vulnerable families. Transition Team staff from across the localities engaged with newly developed forums to further support Derbyshire's COVID recovery including the District Forums and Wellness Hubs.

- 5.4 In the autumn of 2020, the government provided local authorities with the Emergency Assistance Grant to support COVID recovery. Staff from the Transition Team played an essential part in the distribution of this to vulnerable children, young people and families in Derbyshire with the Back to School and Learning Grant (to support children who had not yet returned to education).
- 5.5 Staff from the Transition Team worked at short notice to ensure the effective distribution of the COVID Winter Grant Scheme in December 2020 which resulted in around 29,000 vouchers being issued to vulnerable families.
- 5.6 Winter 2020 and Spring 2021 saw further disruption caused by the pandemic which meant that the briefing sessions and interventions planned to support partner agencies by the Early Help Advisors were not able to proceed or went ahead with reduced partner engagement.
- 5.7 Summer 2021 saw the development and delivery of the Holiday Activities and Food programme (HAF) with the Youth and Community Engagement Workers playing a significant role in supporting community organisations with the planning, preparation, implementation and evaluation of activities during the school holidays. The HAF continued into the winter of 2021 with Transition Team staff supporting the Christmas programme of activities.
- 5.8 The cumulative effect of the issues set out in paragraphs 6.2 – 6.7 mean that 22 months of planned work to develop a future model for the Transitions Team as part of our Early Intervention and Prevention approach have been significantly disrupted, largely due to the direct and indirect effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Team's efforts during the pandemic period have been directed at making a significant positive contribution to provision of support to partners, children and families.

6 Funding for time-limited extension of the Transitions Team: the Supporting Families Programme

- 6.1 The Supporting Families (formerly Troubled Families) Programme is a programme of targeted interventions for families with multiple problems, including crime, anti-social behaviour, truancy, unemployment, mental health problems and domestic abuse. One aim of the Programme is to tackle issues before they require costlier interventions from public services. Supporting Families was introduced to local authorities in response to the civil unrest from the riots which were seen across the UK in 2011. The Department for Levelling Up, Communities and Housing (DLUCH) oversee the performance from each local authority.
- 6.2 Over the past three years, the Supporting Families programme has brought in just under £5.5m of funding to Derbyshire through either payment by results or from Service Transformation Grants which has gone into the Supporting Families reserves. There has been a significant upwards trajectory in performance over the lifetime of the programme in Derbyshire. The Transitions Team are the primary agents in successfully delivery against the requirements of the Supporting Families Programme and have an exemplary record in maximising Derbyshire's income from the scheme. Workers from across Early Help and Safeguarding engage with the Supporting Families programme to ensure that evidence of progression and improvements in family outcomes is gathered in order to make a payment by results claim.
- 6.3 The annual cost of the Transition Team is £1.595m. The Supporting Families reserve of £3.007m, generated through success in delivery of this programme, therefore holds sufficient resources to fund the team from October 2022 to the end of July 2024 (22 months). Any remaining income from the Supporting Families programme is available to support other priority areas across all DCC Departments as required.

7. Developing an Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy

- 7.1 Over the next 12 months, the Executive Director for Children's Services will lead development of an Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy. This work will be undertaken as part of the process of developing and implementing an overarching Children's Services Strategy (2022-25).
- 7.2 The Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy will be co-produced with partners and stakeholders, including children, young people, families and elected members, to set out a partnership vision for the future of Early Intervention and Prevention support.
- 7.3 The Strategy will set out how all partners, including the Early Help Development Service, can support the Council's priority of developing Thriving Communities leading to improved and sustainable outcomes for children, young people, families and communities.
- 7.4 The Strategy will address the future direction of Early Intervention and Prevention activities, including the future model of Early Help and future shape and direction of the Early Help Development Service, and within that, the future for the functions currently provided by the Transitions Team beyond 2024.

8 Consultation

- 8.1 At this stage, and following advice from Legal Services, there is no requirement for a formal consultation with staff and residents due to the exercise to date being focused on evaluation which is set out in section 4 above. If the decision is taken not to extend funding for the service, then a HR timetable will be implemented.

9 Alternative Option Considered

- 9.1 This report has been prepared in the context of the original timeline set out in the Cabinet Report of 31 January 2019, which stated that the Transition Team will cease on 31 August 2022.
- 9.2 The option to cease the Transitions Team would result in lack of support for partnerships to develop and deliver earlier help interventions to children and families, resulting in partner agencies being more reactive rather than proactive in their approach to providing support offering a much-reduced early help offer. The impact of this will be more referrals to frontline teams to support

children, young people and families with intensive and specialist needs.

- 9.3 The option would also mean that the department's in-house Employment and Education Team would not be available to support the council's statutory duties around monitoring young people who are NEET risking the council's ability to maintain the significant progress made. This service would need to be commissioned from a third party.

10 Implications

- 10.1 Appendix 1 sets out the relevant implications considered in the preparation of the report.

11 Background Papers

- 11.1 None identified

12 Recommendation(s)

- 12.1 That Cabinet:

Support the extension of the current Transitions Service on a time-limited basis (for 22 months from 1st October 2022 to 31st July 2024), funded through the accumulated Supporting Families reserve; whilst a co-produced partnership Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy is designed and developed, and further work is undertaken to ascertain what the future partnership delivery model will be.

13 Reasons for Recommendation(s)

- 13.1 Providing a time-limited extension to the Transitions Team will enable the Early Help Development Service to develop and embed a more sustainable approach to Early Help. This will provide continuity of effective support for children, young people and families, and prevent increasing needs from escalation through the Children's Social Care system whilst an Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy is developed. The Strategy will set out the future direction of a more sustainable model of early intervention and prevention partnership support.

14 Is it necessary to waive the call-in period?

14.1 No

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Appendix 1

Implications

1 Financial

- 1.1 There is £3.007m in the Supporting Families reserve, which has not been committed. The current annual cost of the Transition Team is £1.595m per annum, as such there are sufficient resources within current reserve to continue to fund the transition team for a further 22 months October 2022 to the end of July 2024.

2 Legal

- 2.1 Services to protect children, prevent children coming into care or to enable a sustained return home, or to support children in need (including disabled children) are provided under Sections 47 and 17 of the Children Act 1989

Under the Education and Skills Act 2008 (as amended) local authorities have a duty to monitor the education, training, and employment of 16 to 18 year old young people and this monitoring obligation is being fulfilled by the Transition Team.

Elected Members will have regard to the content of this Report demonstrating that the Transitions Team are fulfilling the Council's statutory obligations in this respect, and what alternative provision would be available in the event that the service was not extended as proposed.

An Equality Impact Analysis (EIA) was developed in parallel with the consultation exercise undertaken in 2018. As the proposals in this Report provided for the extension of the service and therefore the continuation of service provision in identical terms, there is no requirement to further consult at this time

3 Human Resources

- 3.1 To support the extension of the Transitions Service until 31 July 2024 dictates that staff in the team (where applicable) need their fixed-term contracts extended until this date, thus committing to existing staffing costs until 31 July 2024 whilst providing stability to the workforce and service. Section 6.3 of the report provides detail of the funding stream. Once a future workforce model has been

designed, consulted and agreed, implications for staff will be considered in line with Council approved organisational change processes.

If approved, the extension to the tenure of the team will mean that those who have been in post from the creation of the team will have sufficient service (four years) in the role to be able to be considered permanent employees despite having a fixed term contract. In practice the policies of the Council and employment legislation mean that they will have the same entitlement to redundancy and redeployment as those with over two years' service, which they currently have.

4 Information Technology

- 4.1 The recommendation will mean that we continue to realise the economies of scale associated with the Core+ system which supports the work of the work of the Education and Employment and the Youth Offending Service and is integral to the statutory reporting of NEET and EET performance.

5 Equalities Impact

- 5.1 N/A

6 Corporate objectives and priorities for change

- 6.1 The proposal set out in section 12 above aligns with the corporate priorities within the Derbyshire Council Plan 2021-2025 around:

- effective early help for individuals and communities
- a prosperous and green Derbyshire
- developing resilient healthy and safe communities.

- 6.1.2 Under the corporate priority of effective early help for individuals and communities, there is a commitment set out that within one year the Council will have “undertaken an evaluation of the early help support and training offered to partner agencies and developed measures to monitor the effectiveness of early interventions for children and families”. Within four years, there is a commitment to support “more people to manage their own physical and mental health and wellbeing”, and to have “embedded effective early help provision for children and families across the county to ensure support is targeted at the most appropriate level”.

- 6.1.3 Under the corporate priority of a prosperous and green Derbyshire, there is a commitment set out that within four years the Council will have “ensured children, young people and adults are empowered to realise their ambitions and maximise their potential”.
- 6.1.3 Under the corporate priority of delivering resilient, health and safe communities, there is a commitment set out that within four years the Council will have “ensured individuals and communities most in need are supported and protected”.
- 7 Other (for example, Health and Safety, Environmental Sustainability, Property and Asset Management, Risk Management and Safeguarding)**
- 7.1 In preparing this report the relevance of the above factors was considered but no implication identified, or no action required.

Appendix 2 – Cabinet report on the Early Help Review from January 2019	 Cabinet report - Early Help Review 31
Appendix 3 – Derby City and Derbyshire Safeguarding Children Partnership Threshold Document 2019	 Threshold 2019.pdf