

Appendix 9

Children's Services Early Help Strategy

Options Analysis

Children’s Services Early Help Strategy Options Analysis

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1. Summary

We've explored the options for delivering a Children's Services Early Help service targeted to managing demand for social care – by offering targeted and intensive interventions.

We explored the best options for future services, including stopping services, in-house and external services and new delivery models. They were assessed for feasibility and affordability, keeping children safe and flexibility.

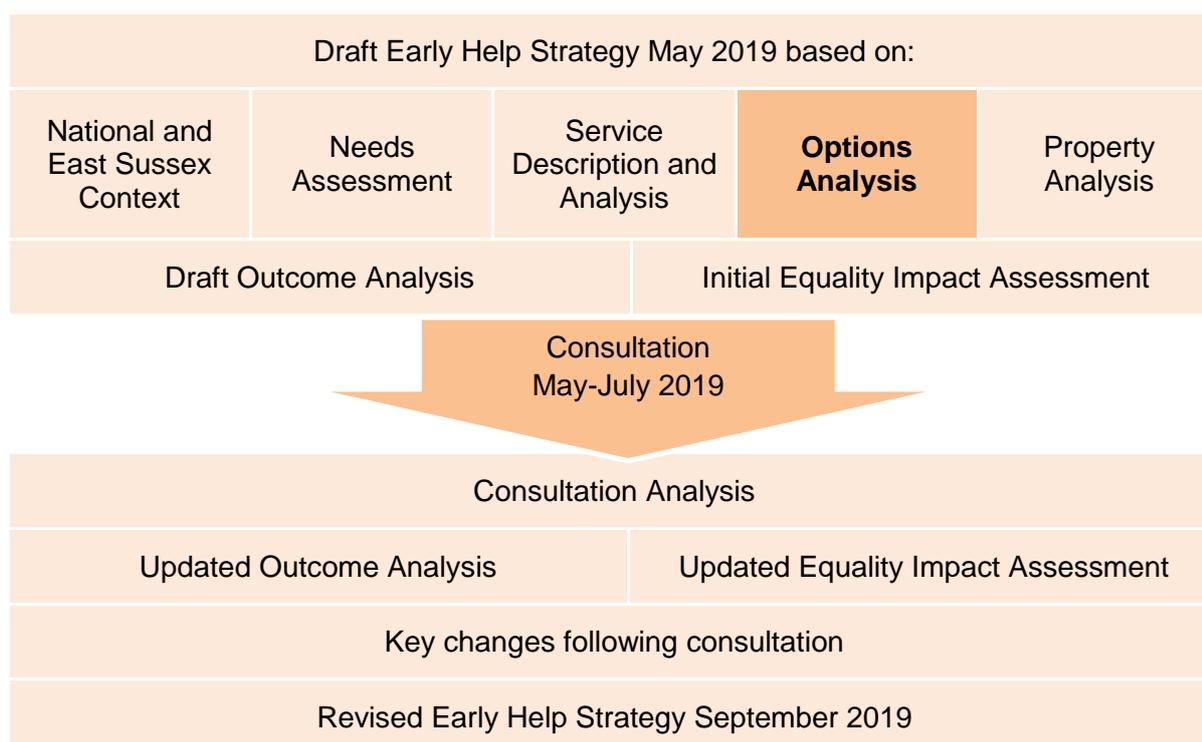
This document was first published in May 2019. It explains why the Council is the only viable provider of keywork services in East Sussex for families with multiple and complex needs. As a result the shortlisted options for further development were identified as: in-house services redesigned to make best use of assets and resources; sharing more children's centres with other providers of family services; exploring opportunities to bid for grant funding in partnership with other partners, where that supports Council priorities.

2. Purpose of this document

This document summarises the work to identify and assess options for providing early help in East Sussex. It was developed during 2018/2019 and first published in May 2019.

The Council's strategic commissioning approach seeks to identify the best option for meeting known needs within available resources, be it decommissioning services, in-house or external services, or new delivery models.

It is one of a suite of analyses provided as supporting evidence to the draft East Sussex Children's Services Early Help Strategy, all of which are available [online](#).



i. How the options were identified

The Council aims to provide the best early help services to increase families' resilience, improve their lives, and manage demand for social care intervention.

The Needs Assessment identified trigger parenting vulnerabilities which lead to social care intervention - mental health, substance misuse and domestic violence issues - and their concentration in specific geographical areas.

The Service Analysis demonstrated that keywork is effective in tackling parenting risks and directly preventing the need for social care interventions. Like national studies, it was unable to demonstrate the effectiveness of wider preventative services in these terms.

Based on this information, we explored the options for delivering a Children's Services Early Help service targeted to manage demand for social care.

A long-list of theoretical options for providing targeted/intensive interventions with the most vulnerable families was identified by our research into:

- International and national studies of delivery models.
- Local innovative pilots.
- Delivery models of councils rated 'Good' by Ofsted at keeping children safe and interviews with a selection of those councils.
- External providers of early help services.

ii. How the options were assessed

The long list of theoretical options was assessed for feasibility using the following as criteria:

- Can be implemented by 1 April 2020 (the time by which we expect resources for Children's Services Early Help will have significantly reduced).
- Achievable within funding constraints: known short term funding and uncertain medium term funding.
- Addresses the priority to keep children safe.
- Builds in flexibility for different funding positions.

This process discounted a number of options, leaving a shortlist of options to take forward as the basis of the strategic commissioning proposal.

3. Findings from research and market analysis

i. Research on good practice

We researched what makes early help effective at supporting vulnerable families to be able to look after their children without social care intervention.

There is considerable variation at national level as to what kind of delivery makes up an early help service offer.

There is increasing recognition of the importance of local commissioning, understanding the local context and the particular needs and demands of the local population to inform prioritisation and targeting of services ([Early Intervention Foundation report 2018](#)).

[ADCS Research in Practice 2014](#) emphasised the need for responsive early help services to recognise and respond to the distinct needs of adolescents. ADCS '[Evaluation of Effective Early Help Services](#)' recommended a focus on early years and school readiness.

Ofsted's thematic inspection of early help services ([Early Help – Whose Responsibility? 2015](#)) highlighted the value of targeting support at families with parental drug and alcohol dependency, domestic abuse and poor mental health.

The [National Troubled Families \(TF\) Programme Evaluation](#) (DCLG 2017) emphasised the benefits of multi-agency working, but stressed the need to improve engagement between local authorities and the voluntary and community sector to ensure that families are supported beyond their involvement with the Troubled Families programme.

Although the literature proposed good practice in delivering services for families with multiple and complex needs, there was no validated evidence to indicate the particular effectiveness of any model over another.

Our literature review suggested the importance of:

- A child / young person centred approach.
- Offering parenting support across all ages.
- Using relationship-based practice.
- Effective assessment and planning.
- Multi-agency communication and cooperation.
- Good leadership, management and supervision.

Research into international practice in early help support mirrored national findings and recommendations. There is some innovative practice in this area, however much of this involves a much higher level of investment and delivery of a universal offer (with some targeted provision).

We explored early help models delivered by four other local authorities with 'good' or 'outstanding' Ofsted reports (North Yorkshire, North East Lincolnshire, Essex and Hackney) – all had:

- A Continuum of Need model.
- A single front door.
- Similar models of assessment, targeted and solution-focused interventions.

- Closed a number of Children's Centres.
- Recognised the value of step up / step down activity (moving families between early help and social care).

East Sussex Children's Services has been developing the offer of short term work, and there is ongoing exploration of 'minimal sufficiency' and doing enough to prevent escalation to the need for social care. We have been piloting Intensive Family Keywork. This is partnership delivery of highly intensive (almost daily) keywork for families on the cusp of social care involvement, particularly for older children. There are initial positive indications that this approach benefits families and young people and could be an enhancement to the current keywork model.

ii. Market Analysis

External providers of early help for East Sussex were researched in detail in a Market Analysis. This took information from the East Sussex Community Information Service, East Sussex Better Together provider mapping activities, and from stakeholder engagement work and research on other councils to identify current providers of relevant services in the public, private, voluntary and community sectors. It enabled the evaluation of potential market development opportunities for delivery of early help services.

Nearly 70 providers were identified in the private, public and third sectors, ranging from a local support group for toddlers to national organisations.

Potential providers based in East Sussex are small in size and are currently providing lower intensity interventions with families with additional needs, rather than families at risk of needing social care intervention. Experience of previously outsourcing Children's Services Early Help suggests that smaller local providers may struggle to develop their offer:

- Across wider geographies.
- To lead a multi-agency approach to families.
- To build relationships with families unwilling to engage.
- Changing from preventative services for families needing extra support to intensive services for families with complex needs, especially managing the risks at the threshold with statutory intervention.
- Applying the required professional standards and providing the necessary supervision and professional development.
- Meeting additional training costs / training support requirements.

The market analysis identified low likelihood that existing providers will be able to meet early help needs. Further, taking on responsibility for early help elements of safeguarding at reducing levels of funding may not be an attractive proposition for providers of family support and advisory services.

NSPCC and Barnardo's, as large national organisations providing a range of children's services, might theoretically be potential providers. Barnardo's is involved in a strategic partnership with Newport in which they work together to provide a continuum of family support services with some shared funding. However, there are no examples of NSPCC or Barnardo's acting as outsourced provider of early help.

4. Options and discounting

24 potential options were identified, in the following groups:

- No change.
- Decommission.
- External options.
- Partnership model options.
- Funding model options.
- ESCC service redesign options.

The options were not mutually exclusive. They were assessed against four feasibility criteria. The assessment's goal was to discount unfeasible options and arrive at a shortlist of options for further evaluation.

The assessment was carried out by a Review Board which included Children's Services Early Help managers, Orbis Business Services, Children's Social Care, Public Health and Communities departments.

The **no change** option was discounted because it would not be achievable within the known short term funding (from April 2020).

The **decommission** option means no longer providing any Children's Services Early Help services. It was discounted because not providing them would increase social care costs, as described in the [Service Analysis](#).

External options for early help have been discounted on the grounds that:

- They could not be implemented by 1 April 2020.
- Medium term funding uncertainty prevents effective procurement and/or due diligence activities.
- Risks to child safety – around splitting child protection systems between two organisations.

Externalising early help is considered a risk to children's safety as it involves the separation of provision from in-house social services, i.e. dividing child safeguarding arrangements between suppliers. The current Children's Services Early Help service is strongly connected to social care through a single triage and records system and a single joined up process across the Continuum of Need. In the current in-house system, families move smoothly between the two services when their needs reduce or increase. Externalising would increase risks to children as a result of the following:

- Probability that the record systems would be separate.
- Costs and risks of information sharing.
- Handover risks.
- Potentially disrupting current workers' relationships with families.
- Families obliged to re-tell stories.
- Reduced ability to move cases between early help and Children's Services social care and vice versa, in children's interests.

If early help was outsourced, there could be a perverse incentive for an early help provider to assess more complex families requiring intensive or extended support as requiring statutory social care intervention. This might lead to friction in the system or cost shunting.

The review of other councils' delivery models found no examples of externalising early help, except as part of the outsourcing of Children's Services. Essex County Council has recently outsourced wellbeing services to Virgin Care, this overlaps the early help scope, but is too new to evaluate. East Sussex previously outsourced 11-19 Keywork to East Sussex voluntary organisations, and later brought the service back in-house to improve performance. These organisations no longer provide any keywork service. A market analysis has identified a low likelihood that existing East Sussex providers of family support and advisory services will be able to meet high risk early help need within the available resources.

Partnership options were discounted for similar reasons to external options: implementation timelines, impracticable in the uncertain medium term funding context and because they would divide provision of children's safeguarding services, increasing risk to children.

Some **funding models** were not feasible. Crowdfunding and civic crowdfunding were discounted on the grounds that they are unlikely to generate funding for children's centres or Children's Services Early Help. These services do not have the characteristics of a successful crowdfunding campaign, which are:

- Citizen to citizen, or initiated by citizen campaign/petition to local government.
- Focussed on public spaces and facilities available to whole communities.
- For something new/additional, rather than replacing public funding.

(Source: Nesta, *Crowdfunding Public Services*, 2015)

Successful civic crowdfunding project examples identified by desktop review are urban, and based on shared responsibility for improving a city/district of a city.

Establishing commercial early years / Children's Services Early Help universal services was discounted due to market conditions, and the expectation that income would not justify the cost.

Service redesign options for internally delivered services were also discounted because they were not expected to ensure child safety. Targeting services to pre-birth and 3 years or younger (including the first 100 days) was felt to be insufficient to manage the risks to children up to 18 years old, as family circumstances can change over time. Integrating with ESCC Early Years services was not expected to yield significant savings. Integration with emotional and wellbeing support in education services was discounted due to proposals for reductions in those services. Absorption of Children's Services Early Help into social care services was discounted due to the risk that resources would be drawn from preventative to reactive activity. Withdrawing from the current integration of Children's Services Early Help services for 0-5 Years with Health Visiting was also discounted, because it did not support affordability of the service, nor promote child safety.

Integration of 0-5 Children's Services Early Help services with Health Visiting delivers the following benefits:

- Ensures co-location of services.
- Enables a single, joined up offer to families with children 0-5, national good practice recommends this as the most crucial period to influence families.
- Integrated health and social care information systems in the age range in which the risk of child deaths from neglect are highest.
- Some shared financial management, with scope to develop this further.

Conclusions from the feasibility assessment are summarised in the table over page.

Assessment of option feasibility against criteria

Group of options	Options	Assessing Feasibility of Options				Conclusion
		Feasible within timescale (1/4/2020)	Feasible within funding constraints and uncertainty	Prioritises keeping children safe	Builds in flexibility	
Feasibility Criteria met: High-3, Medium 2, Low 1, Not met 0						
No change	1. Do nothing (status quo)	3	0	3	2	Discount
Decommission	2. Do not provide early help Services	3	0	0	0	Discount
External options	3. Commission early help from external provider or providers	0	0	0	1	Discount
	4. Create an early help social enterprise	0	0	0	1	Discount
	5. Transfer early help activity into schools and/or School Nursing	0	0	0	1	Discount
Partnership options	6. Jointly commission early help services with Accountable Care Bodies	0	0	0	1	Discount
	7. Partner Children's Services Early Help Activity with onsite commercial Early Years provision	1	1	3	1	Explore via public consultation
	8. Merge early help activity with an external service e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food banks • Citizens Advice • Job Centre Plus • STAR/relevant ASC Services • Adult Education 	0	0	0	1	Discount
	9. Merge Children's Services Early Help with other Local Authority	0	0	0	1	Discount
Funding Model options	10. Commercial services: charge families and/or schools for a broader universal early years service	0	0	2	1	Discount
	11. Generate new grant funding for Children's Services Early Help – working in partnership as appropriate	1	1	3	1	Ongoing

Options Analysis

Group of options	Options	Assessing Feasibility of Options				Conclusion
		Feasible within timescale (1/4/2020)	Feasible within funding constraints and uncertainty	Prioritises keeping children safe	Builds in flexibility	
Feasibility Criteria met: High-3, Medium 2, Low 1, Not met 0						
Funding Model Options	12. Generate crowdfunding or civic crowdfunding for Children's Services Early Help	1	0	3	1	Discount
In-house service redesign options	13. Provide Children's Services Early Help Services integrated 0-19	3	1	3	2	Short list
	14. Target Children's Services Early Help activity to higher levels of need	3	3	3	1	Short list
	15. Target activity to those family vulnerabilities most likely to lead to crisis and social care intervention	3	3	3	2	Short list
	16. Deliver activities from fewer locations	3	2	3	2	Short list
	17. Focus activity on keywork services	3	2	3	2	Short list
	18. Target activity to first 100 days of a child's life	3	3	0	1	Discount
	19. Target activity to edge of care	3	2	1	2	Shortlist
	20. Target activity into shorter, more intense interventions where appropriate	3	2	1	2	Shortlist
	21. Integrate Children's Services Early Help with teams related to school attendance, behaviour, emotional wellbeing	3	0	1	0	Discount
	22. Integrate Children's Services Early Help y with statutory social work	3	1	0	3	Discount
	23. Integrate Children's Services Early Help with Early Years sufficiency activity	3	0	1	3	Discount
	24. Offer universal health services separately from early help	0	0	0	2	Discount

5. Options moving forward

The following options were identified to be taken forward together through development of the proposal.

1. Increasing **grant funding bids** for Children's Services Early Help activity, in partnership with the voluntary and community sector as appropriate, where this supports Council priorities. The context, however, is funding restrictions from many sources, e.g. local and central government, trusts and foundations. This creates challenging bidding conditions, meaning this option can realistically only offer additionality rather than replacing funding streams.
2. Children's Services Early Help **service redesign**, which should take into account:
 - Integrated management for the service from 0 to 19 years.
 - Targeting activity to keywork, higher levels of need and those family vulnerabilities most likely to lead to crisis and social care intervention, and support to children and young people on the edge of care.
 - Delivering activities from fewer locations.
 - Working with the right children for the right amount of time - shorter, more intense interventions where appropriate.
3. **Sharing centres** with private sector providers. The feasibility of sharing more children's centres with private sector providers has been considered in outline. Public consultation provides the opportunity for potential private, public or third sector partners to make proposals for sharing or re-designating centres.

6. References

Section in document	Title of reference or report	Organisation or author	Date of publication / implementation	Internet link
3	What is Early Intervention?	Early Intervention Foundation	2018	Link
3	That Difficult Age	Research in Practice / ACDS	2014	Link
3	Evaluation of effective early help services	ACDS	2016	Link
3	Early help: whose responsibility?	Ofsted	2015	Link
3	National evaluation of the TF Families Programme	Department for Communities and Local Government	2017	Link

The following references and sources were used for the literature review and research into early help services and support nationally and internationally:

Title of reference or report	Organisation or author	Date of publication / implementation	Internet link
Scrutinising alternative delivery models for children's services	Centre for Public Scrutiny / Local Government Association	Dec 2017	Link
A framework of outcomes for young people	The Young Foundation	2012	Link
Essex Virgin Care (website for info)	Essex County Council, Virgincare	current	Link
Infants and Young Children - an interdisciplinary journal of Early Childhood Interventions	Journal	current	Link
Eurochild - Compendium of Inspiring Practices, Early Intervention and Prevention in Family and Parenting Support	Eurochild	2012	Link
Evaluation of a LENA-Based Online Intervention for Parents of Young Children	Research Gate - Journal of Early Intervention	Jul 2017	Link



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