

Birmingham City Council

Report to Cabinet

8 February 2021



Subject: CONTINUATION OF EARLY HELP (EH) PROGRAMME FUNDING FOR 12 MONTHS

Report of: Sue Harrison, Director for Children's Services/Executive Director of Education and Skills

Relevant Cabinet Member: Cllr Sharon Thompson - Vulnerable Children and Families
Cllr Tristan Chatfield - Finance & Resources

Relevant O &S Chair(s): Cllr Narinder Kaur Kooner - Education and Children's Social Care
Cllr Mohammed Aikhlaq - Resources

Report author: Christian Markandu, Strategic Commissioner, Education and Skills

Are specific wards affected?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No – All wards affected
If yes, name(s) of ward(s):		
Is this a key decision?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, add Forward Plan Reference: 009775/2022		
Is the decision eligible for call-in?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, state which appendix is exempt, and provide exempt information paragraph number or reason if confidential:		

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 Birmingham City Council, Birmingham Children's Trust (BCT) and other statutory and VCS organisations in Birmingham are working in partnership to respond to needs during this challenging time.

- 1.2 Early Help schemes were set up in 10 localities across the city to respond to the Pandemic. Each of the ten localities are led by a voluntary sector and public sector partner.

Our role involves connecting and working with nurseries, schools and other educational establishments to support vulnerable children, young people and their families living in the locality. Our early help approach involves:

- Coordinating support to local families through weekly partnership meetings.
- Providing advice and guidance to local partners.
- Collating a list of families, we are worried about.
- Mapping local support and resources that families can draw on.
- Providing access to community grants that voluntary, community, and faith groups can apply for.
- Access to resilience funding for families helping with money, food, medicines, white goods etc.

- 1.3 The Pandemic has been tough for Birmingham families and currently shows no sign of let-up. The Birmingham Children's Partnership locality early help and transformation work by the Council and partners has helped thousands of our most vulnerable families and reduced demand to acute services, see **Appendix 1** for further details.

- 1.4 If low-level needs can be prevented (or delayed) from developing into more serious or acute need then this is advantageous both economically for the Council and life chances for children and families. Effective, early intervention and prevention can not only improve outcomes and the quality of life for children and families, but also provide a financial return to the Local Authority in the form of cost avoidance and a reduction in the use of more expensive, acute resources.

- 1.5 The Pandemic has increased demand for statutory child safeguarding services and increased the complexity of cases. Continuation of the Early Help Programme is business critical to support managing this demand coming through the system.

- 1.6 This report seeks approval for the continued grant funding for priority children's early help services via the Early Help Programme for 12 months from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 for the value of £7.554m. This will enable the Education and Skills Commissioning Team to complete a review exercise for Early Help and produce a longer-term strategy for delivery and funding of Early Help

- 1.7 The Early Help Programme with the voluntary sector as lead is supported by an early help workforce, which enables families to draw on community resources and connections, helping them to access locality-based family support and build resilience

Individual Service Information

Organisation & Brief Description	Background
BVSC: Locality Leads; Community Connector Service & COVID19	20 FTE staff employed to deliver the community connect service in localities, with a service manager in BVSC to coordinate delivery.
Children's Trust Early Help: Locality Teams	Each locality employs an Early Help Manager and a team of Early Help workers/professionals employed by BCT
Evaluation / Culture: 2 x Apprentice Commissioners / BCT	Two apprentices with experience of the health and care system work on service design and engagement, ensuring children and young people are involved in service design
Forward Thinking Birmingham: Mental Health & Wellbeing School Facing EWB / STICK	Provides both consultancy development of locality early help staff and direct support to children and young people.
KOOTH: Mental Health & well Being: Online Counselling	KOOTH offers young people a broad range of anonymous Mental Health support.
Interpretation Services: 9 x Voluntary Sector Organisations	Ensures each locality can use interpreters, for families who need this support. The funding is held by BCT and localities request funding as needed.
Online Parenting Courses / Solihull Approach	Online parenting support – important part of the offer for parents, grandparents, and carers especially during the Pandemic.
Schools FE Nurseries; ECINS Licence	Payment for ECINS license (Electronic Charting and Integrated Navigation System).

- 1.8 The Education and Skills Commissioning Team have undertaken a mid-year review of the programme to support decision-making regarding the future of the Early Help Programme from April 2022 onwards.
- 1.9 The recommendations for this report are in the context of the review and of funding ceasing in March 31, 2022. A Business Case has been developed by BCT to continue the Early Help Programme for a further five years from 1 April 2022.
- 1.10 This extension and continued funding will enable the continuation of the programme without interruption while the Education and Skills Commissioning Team develop a model which incorporates increased prevention and achieves clear measurable outcomes for children and families in the city. Further consideration needs to be taken on how the EH Programme will operate in the future with the health Integrated Care System (ICS), the recommissioning of our

Healthy Child Programme (0-25), the Council's Early Intervention and Prevention programme and other key strategic developments expected in the next twelve months.

2 Recommendations

That Cabinet:

- 2.1 Approves the continued grant funding for priority children's early help services via the Early Help Programme for 12 months from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 for the value of £7.554m.
- 2.2 Delegates authority to the Director of Council Management to award grants in consultation with the Director of Children's Services.
- 2.3 Authorises the Acting City Solicitor to negotiate and complete any documents to give effect to the above decisions.

3 Background

- 3.1 Three years ago, the Council and its partners established Birmingham Children's Partnership (BCP) to help tackle many years of failing children's services. One of the main aims of the BCP was to establish a system wide approach to Early Help in the City.
- 3.2 A further year's funding for a city-wide approach across the full ten localities was agreed in March 2021.
- 3.3 The Early Help Programme was set up under the auspices of BCP to be delivered through BCT, BVSC and ten localities, each locality led by a voluntary sector organisation, via letters of agreement between the partners and several specialist services.
- 3.4 This unique model with the voluntary sector as lead supported by an early help workforce enables families to draw on community resources and connections, helping them to access locality-based family support.
- 3.5 The Early Help Mid-Year Review Report has been drafted which outlines the progress of the programme to date. This report reviews the progress of the Early Help Programme in the context of grant funding ceasing at the end of 2021/22 and the work on a Business Case to secure longer-term funding for the programme. A summary of key outcomes achieved by the programme can be found in the **Appendix 1**.
 - 3.5.1 Following the review, work has commenced between the Education and Skills Commissioning Team and the Trust to develop and strengthen reporting on outcomes reporting. This work will underpin any new commissioning arrangements going forward. An outcomes framework will be developed 2022/23
 - 3.5.2 There are a substantial number of early intervention approaches that have good evidence of improving children's outcomes when they are offered in

response to identified risks. These approaches can support the four key domains of children's development: physical, cognitive, behavioural, and social and emotional. A package of proposals for school engagement and support and Electronic Charting and Integrated Navigation System (ECINS) training has been developed, at an approximate cost of £40k, which should considerably enhance the capability to record basic data. A robust data recording system is a prerequisite whether it is for activity, outputs or outcomes. The additional funding would be to secure:

- a school consultant working 2 days a week employed by Birmingham Education Partnership (BEP)
- a senior administrator to support schools in using ECINS
- early help software, with a dedicated phone line
- establishment of an ECINS superuser with a clear focus on robust data collection

3.5.3 As part of the BCT Business Case, a similar package of infrastructure support (ECINS) has been proposed, integrated within their total package.

3.5.4 A bid has been submitted to the Department of Education in regard to Family Hub: Local Transformation Fund, which if successful, would complement and enhance the Early Help Programme.

Early Help Programme Progress

3.6 The Early Help Programme has made progress in the following areas: -

- 3.6.1 **The EH programme has significantly increased the capacity of help for families:** The Programme has established ten localities with ten voluntary sector organisations leading each locality, working in partnership with the Birmingham Children's Trust Early Help teams.
- 3.6.2 Families can now access a range of practical help and interventions to support their needs and prevent escalation into more specialist services, programmes currently on offer.
- 3.6.3 Over the past 12 months the EH Programme has supported over 17,000 families in the localities. The Programme has provided family support, advice and guidance including links to food banks, connected families to professionals who can support them and coordinate the help, supported early help assessments, connected families into the local community resources to help families to be more resilient, and give small grants for emergency food assistance.
- 3.6.4 **Connected our most vulnerable families to this support:** The Programme has trained 1,500 professionals every month for the past year. This has included advising them of what is available in each local community. We have delivered hundreds of EH briefings to Education, Health, Social Care,

Housing, GPs linked over 9,000 families to community grants to receive financial help.

3.6.5 The Programme has supported 7,200 families to receive financial assistance, preventing homelessness, poverty and improving wellbeing. The Programme has diverted 5,000 young people to access Kooth mental health support at an early point to prevent deterioration of their mental health.

3.6.6 More than 1,000 families have accessed on-line parenting support training. This has prevented the need for more in-depth specialist support being needed or having to wait for help when it is needed.

3.6.7 **Developed personal relationships between professionals:** We recognise that all children need their own support network of family and friends to help them feel safe, happy and loved. Sometimes families need extra support from professionals involved. We call this 'Team Around the Child' or 'TAC'.

3.6.8 The Programme has established multi-agency teams around schools, that enables our 500 plus education settings to reach out to their local services and build lasting relationships. We have devised an Early Help Handbook for practitioners made up of frequently asked questions.

3.6.9 **Worked with children and young people to develop a compelling vision:** The Programme has worked with young researchers and 4,000 children and young people across the city to amplify their voice and shape the vision. The Programme has been shortlisted for a national award due to the excellent work that has been done to co-produce the Early Help and prevention vision with children and young people of the City.

3.6.10 **Strengthened governance arrangements:** The Programme has focused on improving synergy within existing governance arrangements, so they make a tangible difference.

3.7 This design has not been developed in isolation: it was built on foundations laid in the vision of early help from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

Measuring Outcomes

3.8 There are currently two ways of measuring the impact of EH, an outcomes wheel embedded into ECINS which tracks progress made and secondly, reviewing whether the number of Children in Need or statutory assessments is decreasing in BCT.

3.8.1 **Distance Travelled Data:** The distance travelled evidence from the outcome star would work, though each locality would have to use the same indicators on the outcome star, and all would have to take part fully. An aggregate report quarterly would work.

3.8.2 **Impact on Contacts, Referrals and Re-referrals:** In addition, it would be helpful to know the impact on contact, referrals and re-referrals. This work

will be taken forward between the Council (Commissioning, Education and Skills) and BCT.

- 3.8.3 **Case Studies:** Regular case studies per locality each quarter to demonstrate the difference made to the lived experiences of children and their families will be collected as part of the evaluation of this next phase of early help rollout

3.9 The Commissioning Team have undertaken a needs analysis on behalf of the Birmingham Children's Partnership (BCP). This was delivered against several key themes including: Infant mortality, Domestic abuse, School exclusions, Homelessness, and Mental Health. Going forward we will ensure the programme and key performance indicators will be aligned to these key themes.

3.10 The needs analysis recommends we continue our move to a more community/localities-based approach to meet the needs of our children and families, and the EH model would be very well placed to support this.

4 Options considered and Recommended Proposal

4.1 The table below outlines three potential options for the future of the Early Help Programme.

4.2 The Council has three potential options:

1. Do Nothing
2. Request a 12-month extension
3. Agree 3-5 years funding

4.3 The preferred option and recommendations are to continue funding for the Early Help Programme for a further 12 months. This extension will enable the continuation of the programme whilst Education and Skills Commissioning Team develop a model which incorporates increased prevention and achieves clear measurable outcomes for children and families in the City and demonstrates the value of the programme. The development of such strategy will become part of the fabric of the new Early Intervention and Prevention work that the wider Council is currently developing and the further opportunities from the launch of the ICS in Health.

5 Consultation

5.1 As part of the mid-year review undertaken by the Education and Skills Commissioning Team, interviews were carried out with the localities. Meetings were held with BVSC and the ten localities, The main themes:

- A move to an outcomes-based approach including collection of outcome data and with a greater focus on 'prevention'
- Longer-term sustained funding of the programme to enable better planning and recruitment (consistent staffing is essential for vulnerable families)
- The Council's formal procurement process that would need to be followed

6 Risk Management

- 6.1 The following risks and mitigations have been identified:
- 6.2 Grant funding does not result in contractual liabilities for the Council for early termination, meaning that the Early Help Programme can be terminated at any point by the Council should any significant change in circumstances arise.
- 6.3 Grant funding does not give significant control over the form of the activity, performance management etc. since the only real sanction is to terminate grant funding. The extension of grant funding therefore poses some continuing issues around compliance, which may only be resolved once a contract is in place.
- 6.4 As the grant funding reaches the end of the grant period, it becomes increasingly difficult for Early Help delivery organisations to recruit to vacancies as there is no ongoing secure funding and consequently no job security for existing and potential new employees, with therefore potential for service disruption. However, assurances by the Council to give at least three months' notice of cessation would mitigate this risk
- 6.5 During the period of the grant funding extension, there will be a need to develop a detailed Specification, including Key Performance Indicators, which will need to reflect a new, robust model of service delivery, plus many other procurement activities. Whilst the extension period should allow sufficient time for all this to be completed, in the context of Covid-19, there will remain a risk of breaching the timetable requirements.

7 Compliance Issues

7.1 How are the recommended decisions consistent with the City Council's priorities, plans and strategies?

The recommended decisions are consistent with the Council's priorities, plans and strategies and supports the Vision and Priorities in the Birmingham City Council Plan 2018-2022 as agreed by Cabinet with specific focus on the following priority.

Priority 4: We will improve early intervention and prevention work to secure healthy lifestyles and behaviours.

7.2 Legal Implications:

The Council has the power to enter into this activity by the general power competence secured by Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011, to make provision for the functions and procedures of local authorities and to make provision about local government finance. The activity is within the boundaries and limits of the general power set out in Section 2 and 4 of the Localism Act 2011 respectively. Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 confers power to do anything which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of their functions of the Council. The services provided under these

arrangements will facilitate and be conducive or incidental to the discharge of a wide range of the Council's statutory duties, including those relating to safeguarding, and specifically to the Council's general duty under section 17 of the Children Act 1989 to safeguard and promote the welfare of children within its area who are in need and, so far as it is consistent with that duty, promote the upbringing of those children by their families, by providing a range and level of services appropriate to those children's needs.

7.3 Financial Implications:

The Council will commit to further 12 months of funding at £7.554. Sufficient funding is available within the proposed MTFP for financial year 2022/23 to allow for this commitment.

7.4 Procurement Implications (if required):

This report seeks Cabinet approval to continue funding for the Early Help Programme for 12 months from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 to allow time for a commissioning and procurement exercise to be carried out.

7.5 Human Resources Implications (if required):

If the extension is not approved, there is a high degree of likelihood that all the early help voluntary sector staff will need to be made redundant. It would be good practice to give voluntary organisation three months' notice of the cessation of funding, as they will have financial implication for them flowing from the redundancies.

7.6 Public Sector Equality Duty:

Cabinet approval for this extension will have a positive impact on groups with protected characteristics.

8 Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix 1 - Early Help Mid-Year Review Report
- 8.2 Appendix 2 - BCP Draw Down of Monies from Budget for Early Help Interim Funding
- 8.3 Appendix 3 - Key Impact of the Early Help Programme and Outcomes to Date

9 Background Documents

N/A