



## Report to Children and Families Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee 25<sup>th</sup> February 2021

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**Report of:** John Macilwraith

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**Subject:** MAST Update

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**Author of Report:** Helen Sweaton, Assistant Director Prevention and Early Intervention, Children and Families.

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### Summary:

Sheffield City Council are committed to providing early help to children, young people and families. Significant investment and support has resulted in multi-agency working to identify children and families who may need early help and a wide early help offer being available.

Our partnership early help offer operates across the City, providing a whole family key worker model of support delivered out of family centres and link sites, schools, community centres and social care offices.

During the Covid-19 pandemic schools, health professionals and those in the voluntary sector have worked together to ensure children and families have had access to support. This has been especially important to some children and families e.g. those who have been shielding, have experienced additional poverty, live with parental conflict, have struggled as a result of the increased isolation.

Since 2018 we have worked hard with through early years work in children centres, the work with schools and with Voluntary and Community Sector partners to identify and support children and families at the earliest opportunity.

At the same time the number of families experiencing poor outcomes as a result of poverty (including low wage working families) and disproportionality has increased. This has increased the complexity of the work being undertaken with children and families.

Although we continue to invest in Early Help, and lots of fantastic support continues to prevent the escalation of need, the work is often more complex now and we know about more children and families who would benefit. As a result, sometimes families have to wait too long to access early help .

As we have increased our ability to identify need, new ways to access early help have developed. There is always a MAST intervention worker who acts as

the keyworker for a family, but because of the increased complexity, specialist workers may also be involved. Our workforce, Partners and Parents tell us it can be difficult to navigate our early help system.

To address these issues the Lead Member for Children and Families agreed a Review of Early Help. The aim of the review is to articulate an ambition for locality based early intervention services to children and families across Sheffield. This review commenced on 27th February 2020.

The Early Help review aims to:

- Development of one integrated and coordinated offer of early help services delivered in localities which is strengths based and whole family
- Streamlined pathways into the offer based on data and referral information
- Increased case holding capacity whilst maintaining specialist function
- Locality working

The steering group agreed the vision for the review should be the co-produced vision articulated in the inclusion strategy. “Sheffield will be an inclusive city where we work together to ensure that all children receive the right support at the right time so that they live a happy and fulfilled life”

Five workstreams will focus on data, pathways, interventions, workforce development and locality working. All workstreams commenced activity in July 2020. Engagement with all relevant staff and Unions is ongoing. Planning is underway to ensure appropriate engagement with partners and children and families.

In July 2018, in order to contribute to the delivery of the Inclusion Strategy, Achieving Change no 385 Children & Families, Prevention & Early Intervention Service re-organisation reshaped and refocused the MAST service. Some of the workforce moved to the Commissioning, Inclusion and Learning Service.

From July 2018 MAST, Early Help Services in Children and Families has included Prevention and Intervention workers delivering to children and families and Social Workers for Prevention and Intervention (SWIPI) supporting and screening for Early Help Services.

This update articulates the activity undertaken by the Children and Families MAST service to contribute to the wider early help offer available.

Full time intervention workers are a Key Worker for between 10 and 12 families. Our practice standards are robustly monitored through performance and quality assurance. MAST deliver Early Help Training to schools and other colleagues. In 2019/20 32% of referrals to MAST were from Health partners and 25% were from schools.

Prior to the first Covid-19 lockdown 2,572 children were open to MAST. Since the start of the covid-19 pandemic we have not closed many families. In addition to supporting families who have a MAST keyworker, MAST staff contacted all of the 687 families who had children on the NHS shielded list.

In order to provide the capacity to mitigate some of the impact of covid-19 Cabinet agreed additional funding for one year to mitigate the vacancy savings

target for the next financial year. MAST were able to recruit to 22 vacant posts. It is anticipated that future vacancies will not be recruited to as the additional funding is due to end this year.

The information presented has been requested by the Committee.

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**Type of item:** The report author should tick the appropriate box

Reviewing of existing policy	
Informing the development of new policy	
Statutory consultation	
Performance / budget monitoring report	
Cabinet request for scrutiny	
Full Council request for scrutiny	
Call-in of Cabinet decision	
Briefing paper for the Scrutiny Committee	<b>x</b>
Other	

**The Scrutiny Committee is being asked to:**

The Committee is asked to note the work undertaken by the MAST service during the covid-19 pandemic and consider the progress of the Early Help Review and provide' views and comments

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**Background Papers:**



Day in the life of an intervention worker.p  
Early Help Review.pdf

**Category of Report:** OPEN (please specify)

## Report of the Director of John Macilwraith

### MAST Update

#### 1. Introduction

- 1.1. Sheffield City Council are committed to providing early help to children, young people and families. Significant investment and support has resulted in multi-agency working to identify children and families who may need early help and a wide early help offer being available.
- 1.2. Our partnership early help offer operates across the City, providing a whole family key worker model of support delivered out of family centres and link sites, schools, community centres and social care offices. When needs are identified MAST intervention workers coordinate multi-agency plans of support and involve specialists when appropriate. Specialists have detailed knowledge and experience around key issues affecting children and families e.g. school attendance and inclusion, domestic abuse, parenting support, children's and adult's mental health.
- 1.3. During the Covid-19 pandemic schools, health professionals and those in the voluntary sector have worked together to ensure children and families have had access to support. This has been especially important to some children and families e.g. those who have been shielding, have experienced additional poverty, live with parental conflict, have struggled as a result of the increased isolation.

#### 2. Context

- 2.1. In July 2018 Achieving Change no 385 **Children & Families, Prevention & Early Intervention Service re-organisation** reshaped and refocused the MAST service. Prior to the achieving change Early Help was delivered through Multi Agency Support Teams (MAST) and Early Years Best Start teams based in localities.
- 2.2. To support the development and delivery of the inclusion strategy the following transferred from Children and Families to Commissioning Inclusion and Learning:
  - Early Years delivering a core family centre offer and infant feeding programme.
  - A Specialist offer delivering support, advice and consultation to the workforce on Attendance and Inclusion, Senior Learning Mentors, Building Successful Families,
  - A Specialist parenting and domestic abuse model.

- 2.3. From July 2018 MAST, Early Help Services in Children and Families has included:
- Prevention and Intervention workers delivering to children and families
  - Social Workers for Prevention and Intervention (SWIPI) supporting and screening for Early Help Services.
- 2.4. Sheffield's Children and Families MAST Service remains committed to enabling and supporting all children, young people and families to be safe, healthy and successful now and in the future.
- 2.5. Since 2018, we have worked hard with through the early years work in children centres, the work with schools and with Voluntary and Community Sector partners to identify children and families who would benefit from early help at the earliest opportunity. This has increased the number of children and families receiving early help from universal services e.g. schools and health services and means we know about families who would benefit from a keyworker earlier.
- 2.6. At the same time the number of families experiencing poor outcomes as a result of poverty increased including low wage working families. The disproportionality in the City means children with less are often left wanting more. This increased the complexity of the keyworking being undertaken with children and families. The number of headline problems being addressed by keyworkers through coordinated action plans, and the time taken to make improvements increased.
- 2.7. In July 2019 Ofsted confirmed "Strong partnership working and the support of a range of specialist services help to improve children's lives."
- 2.8. Although we continue to invest in Early Help and lots of fantastic support continues to prevent the escalation of need, the work is often more complex now and we know about more children and families who would benefit. There is a disproportionate resource allocated to identification and assessment which means there are not enough 'case holding' workers to undertake the keyworker role for families. This has made it difficult for the service to manage the referrals and allocations. Sometimes families have to wait too long.
- 2.9. As we have increased our ability to identify need new ways to access early help have developed. There is always a MAST intervention worker who acts as the keyworker for a family, but because of the increased complexity, specialist workers (who don't undertake the keyworker role)

may also be involved. Partners, parents and our workforce sometimes tell us it can be difficult to navigate our early help system, they aren't always clear how to access services and sometimes there is duplication which is inefficient and means families have to tell their story more than once.

- 2.10. The Building Successful Families: Early Help System Guide has both acknowledged the integration challenge presented by the distinct statutory duties supported through our Early Help Offer and highlighted the maturity of the local strategic partnership responsible for the Early Help System. The development of the system guide has informed the strategic planning and prioritisation for the Early Help Review. It is hoped that this will provide the opportunity to show Sheffield as an exemplar for Early Help delivery through the Troubled Families programme.
- 2.11. To address these issues the Lead Member for Children and Families agreed a Review of Early Help. The aim of the review is to articulate an ambition for locality based early intervention services to children and families across Sheffield.
- 2.12. The Early Help review aims to:
  - Development of one integrated and coordinated offer of early help services delivered in localities which is strengths based and whole family
  - Streamlined pathways into the offer based on data and referral information
  - Increased case holding capacity whilst maintaining specialist function
  - Locality working
- 2.13. This review commenced on 27th February 2020. Progress was initially impacted by Covid-19.

### **3. What MAST do**

- 3.1. Intervention and Prevention workers are geographically based across the City. We allocate more workers in the North and West, as demand for Early Help is greatest in these areas. All of the workforce is now all able to work remotely, however they have always operated out of a range of venues based in localities e.g. family centres and link sites, schools, community buildings.

- 3.2. Full time intervention workers are a Key Worker for between 10 and 12 families. We work with families for a range of different reasons:
- Children who are missing school
  - Children at risk of entering/re-entering children's social care
  - Children and adults with emotional and mental health issues
  - Children with challenging behaviour
  - Families affected by domestic abuse
  - Families affected by substance misuse
  - Families experiencing poverty, at risk of homelessness or long term unemployment
  - Families with needs around parenting
- 3.3. Our practice standards are robustly monitored through performance and quality assurance. Children and families are visited, multi-agency plans are coordinated through Team Around the Family meetings and interventions are delivered to meet identified needs.
- 3.4. Early Help Training led by MAST is delivered to schools and other colleagues on TAF meetings, Early Help Assessments, Voice of the Child and Engaging Adults in Meaningful conversations. Evaluation evidences this is valued. The Voice of the Child training is co-delivered by the Young Advisors and their input has been fantastic and given an important insight and depth to the training.
- 3.5. Professionals can refer using any high quality assessment (Early Help Part 1 form, FCAF, Myplan, Social Care assessment) and we also accept professional letters from health (GP and CAMHS usually refer via professional letter). In 2019/20 32% of referrals to MAST were from Health partners and 25% were from schools.
- 3.6. Families can self-refer by telephoning the service, we will discuss what their issues are and how we can best offer support. If there are any services already working with the family, we will establish if the family would work with them and consider if they could undertake an assessment of the family's strengths and needs to establish which services may best meet their needs. Only 2% of referrals to MAST are self-referrals.
- 3.7. MAST also pick up referrals from schools in Vulnerable Learner Review meetings and Early Years Partnership meetings. MAST provide support to children and young people who need a care assessment to contribute to an EHCP when they do not have or need a social worker.
- 3.8. MAST are a key partner in the Secondary and Primary Inclusion Panels to provide the necessary support to children (and their families) who schools identify are at risk of exclusion.

- 3.9. In response to requests for support MAST has developed multi-agency community programmes, linked to schools, to develop robust agency responses to critical issues in communities. These are:
- Chaucer School: Multi-agency response to support the impact of gangs activity and CCE in the local community.
  - Fir Vale School: Multi-agency response to improve community cohesion for the large Roma and Slovak communities on the estate, to reduce community tension and support the school in managing incidents and reducing exclusions.
  - Meynell School: Partnership project to support the school with a high incidence of PX or children at risk of PX, high SEN and children on or awaiting EHC Plans.
  - King Eckberts School: Multi-agency response to support the school with a range of emotional wellbeing and mental health concerns including suicide and threat of suicide.
- 3.10 MAST undertake visits to children (and their families) who are electively home educated and those who are missing from education when this information is provided to us by schools.

#### **4. What MAST has done during the Covid-19 pandemic**

- 4.1 Prior to the first Covid-19 lockdown 2,572 children were open to MAST. We have stayed in contact with all of these families during lockdown, making, on average 600 contacts (telephone calls, virtual meetings, door stop visits, food parcel deliveries etc) each week.
- 4.2 Since the start of the covid-19 pandemic we have not closed many families to MAST, usually we would close around 600 families each month, which enables us to allocate around 600 new referrals.
- 4.3 In the first lockdown MAST contacted all of the 687 families who had children on the shielded list who requested support, many of whom had support needs met through the Service.
- 4.4 MAST have maintained contact with all of the primary and secondary schools in the City, collecting and sharing information to accurately identify the vulnerable children and young people in line with the government definitions
- 4.5 MAST have supported some vulnerable families who wanted to take up a school place but were unable to manage to transport their children due to the implications of the pandemic e.g. those who relied on family or friends.



- 4.6 MAST have supported families on the neuro-disability pathway contacting those waiting for autism assessment and signposting to support where appropriate.
- 4.7 We accurately anticipated that the end of the first lockdown would bring an increase in referrals to the service when schools and GPs are seeing all children and families more regularly again.
- 4.8 Based on the available information and referral trends we anticipated an influx of a minimum of 500 additional cases as lockdown eased. These would be a combination of early help referrals and cases stepped down from children's social care.
- 4.9 Cabinet agreed additional funding to mitigate the vacancy savings target for the next financial year. MAST were able to recruit to 22 vacant posts providing the capacity to mitigate some of the impact of covid-19. It is anticipated that future vacancies will not be recruited to as the additional funding is due to end this year. This will further reduce the capacity of the service to meet the current demand.

## **5. Early Help Review**

- 5.1 The Early Help Review commenced on 27th February 2020. Progress was initially impacted by Covid-19. The Steering Group with senior managers across the people portfolio re-commenced on the 9th June 2020.
- 5.2 The steering group agreed the vision for the review should be the co-produced vision articulated in the inclusion strategy. "Sheffield will be an inclusive city where we work together to ensure that all children receive the right support at the right time so that they live a happy and fulfilled life"
- 5.3 Five workstreams will focus on data, pathways, interventions, workforce development and locality working. All workstreams commenced activity in July 2020. Initially the workstreams have collating the relevant information and evidence to inform needs analysis for the current situation.
- 5.4 The data workstream has identified Education, Health and Local Authority are the key sources of data. In general, data is collected, recorded and reports are generated in silos. The lack of data from health creates barriers, especially for early years. Data is not used for effective predictive analysis.
- 5.5 The pathways workstream has identified more than 20 separate pathways and 69 referral documents (some are old versions of the same document). Around 20 panels operate to identify need or allocate resource. The 5 main

management information systems are all separate and don't talk to each other.

5.6 The interventions workstream has identified more than 80 early help interventions are currently delivered by our workforce. In addition, a large number of services are commissioned by Sheffield City Council to provide early help in communities.

5.7 The localities workstream has identified that 52 community buildings/spaces let by housing are used for early help. We have 7 well used family centres and 6 outreach buildings. Practitioners have developed networks with other practitioners in the local area.

5.8 The workforce workstream has identified there are 371 people delivering early help in Sheffield City Council People Portfolio with an excellent range of knowledge, skills and experience. There are 71 different role and grade combinations. Caseload information is spread across different systems and is not comparable. The Keyworker role appears to be predominantly with the intervention workers in MAST.

5.9 Communications and Engagement is led by the Workforce Workstream, Each steering group member has committed to engage through a variety of communication methods, with their workforce – all communications will be in line with the current public health guidance on social distancing. Engagement with all relevant staff and Unions is ongoing. Planning is underway to ensure appropriate engagement with partners and children and families.

## **6 What does this mean for the people of Sheffield?**

6.1 MAST provides a valuable key worker intervention to support children and families to address problems and improve outcomes without the need for statutory intervention. This benefits the whole community as well as the individual family.

6.2 Sometimes children and families have to wait too long to get the support they need. If problems are left to escalate this can put pressure on communities.

6.3 Delivery of the Early Help Review will increase the capacity in the current in current system to increase the number of children who will

receive the right support at the right time so that they live a happy and fulfilled life.

- 6.4 The Early Help Review has been organised to contribute to the co-produced vision set out in the Inclusion Strategy. Although the early help agenda is wider than inclusion in education, the vision articulates the hopes and aspirations of children, parent/ carers, communities and services for all children and families.
- 6.5 Planning is underway to ensure appropriate engagement and consultation with services and communities informs the Early Help Review

## **7 What does this mean for the young people of Sheffield?**

- 7.1 MAST provides a valuable key worker intervention to support children and families to address problems and improve outcomes without the need for statutory intervention.
- 7.2 Feedback from children and young people (collected through direct work and quality assurance activity) indicates they like having a keyworker who gets to know them and works with their family to make things better. Sometimes children and families have to wait too long to get the support they need.
- 7.3 Delivery of the Early Help Review will increase the capacity in the current in current system to increase the number of children who will receive the right support at the right time so that they live a happy and fulfilled life.
- 7.4 Case work is consent based and children and families are at the centre of every Team Around the Family. Both parent and child (where appropriate) voice are collected during quality assurance which directly informs service development.
- 7.5 The Early Help Review has been organised to contribute to the co-produced vision set out in the Inclusion Strategy. Although the early help agenda is wider than inclusion in education, the vision articulates the hopes and aspirations of children, parent/ carers, communities and services for all children and families.
- 7.6 Planning is underway to ensure appropriate engagement and consultation with children and families informs the Early Help Review.

## **8. Recommendation**

- 8.1 The Committee is asked to note the work undertaken by the MAST service during the covid-19 pandemic and consider the progress of the Early Help Review and provide' views and comments.

