

# Education, Children and Families Committee

10 am, Tuesday, 10 December 2013

## Family and Community Support Service

Item number	8.1
Report number	
Wards	All

### Links

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Single Outcome Agreement	<a href="#">SO3.</a>

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# Executive summary

## Family and Community Support Service

### Summary

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This report updates the committee on developments within the Family and Community Support Service within the Children and Families Department.

It consists of a number of services focused on strengthening families. These are briefly described, with information about the changes in those services.

### Recommendations

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1. Committee is asked to note the content of this report and the plan to bring a further update report to Committee with performance information during 2014.

### Measures of success

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The services discussed in this report have undergone a process of change and a performance management framework based on the Getting it Right for Every Child wellbeing indicators is currently being refined.

Services will be reporting their impact against the goal established by the Children and Families Department to reduce the need to accommodate children so that more resources can be committed to early intervention and prevention.

### Financial impact

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There are no financial implications arising from the content of this report.

### Equalities impact

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There are no adverse consequences for equalities arising from the content of this report.

### Sustainability impact

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There is no impact for sustainability arising from this report.

### Consultation and engagement

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This report, updating the Committee, has not been the subject of consultation.

**Background reading / external references**

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None.

## Family and Community Support Service

### 1. Background

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- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with information about developments in Family and Community Support within Children and Families, and about the services it provides.
- 1.2 Family and Community Support is one part of the Support for Children and Young People service within the Children and Families Department, working alongside the other Support for Children and Young People divisions: Children's Practice Teams, Looked After and Accommodated Children, Disability, Additional Support for Learning, and Special Schools and Specialist Provision.
- 1.3 Family and Community Support comprises a number of distinct, complementary services, all of which have been involved in change and development over the last year:
- Family Solutions
  - Support to Parents and Carers
  - Family Group Decision Making Service
  - Young People's Service
  - Safer Families Edinburgh
  - Multisystemic Therapy (MST)
- 1.4 Services work to the following principles:
- Identify and solve problems early on, and so reduce the need for higher tariff services;
  - Improve our capacity to support parents in fulfilling their role to prevent breakdown of a child's links with family and community;
  - Work to help families themselves to find solutions, as well as providing practical help;
  - Strengthen support for schools and other service settings so they can sustain their work with particular children and families;
  - Work to help children and families to take individual and collective responsibility;
  - Develop increased mutual confidence among colleagues in different services, departments and agencies.
  - Where possible, services should be delivered locally, enhancing partnership with other neighbourhood colleagues.

- 1.5 It should be noted that these principles place a major emphasis on the importance of the family as the focus of support and intervention. So, although the initial reason for involvement may relate to a particular child, it is likely that the response will involve engagement with parents and the challenges faced by the family as a whole. Staff will always seek to recognise and build on strengths as well as responding to need. Seeing things from the family's perspective also means trying to build relationship, ensuring that the system of professionals makes human sense to family members. This will often imply a main key practitioner with whom family members can develop trust and who can help them to manage their interactions with a number of other agencies.
- 1.6 The service was accredited with the Customer Service Excellence award in 2012. It was re-assessed in 2013 on a further set of indicators and the award has been confirmed.

## 2 Main report

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### **Evolving Context**

- 2.2 The focus of Children and Families has continued to be on achieving earlier engagement with difficulties faced by children and young people. This is recognised to be important both for the outcomes for each child and in order to ensure sustainability of services. The closer to a crisis that help is provided, the more expensive it is likely to be.
- 2.3 The services within Family and Community Support have changed over the last year to address this challenge in a focused way. This report provides information about the individual services and their operation in that context.
- 2.4 The Family and Community Support services will be monitored and evaluated within a performance management framework which is currently being refined. The outcomes of evaluation will be reported to Committee in 2014.

### **Family Solutions**

- 2.5 The Family Solutions service was created during 2013, following a service review, by bringing together three existing services and complementing those resources with additional funding from the Early Years / Early Intervention Change Fund. The predecessor services were, Edinburgh Family Support Service, The Social Care Workers Service and the Stenhouse Weekend Crisis Service.
- 2.6 Family Solutions works alongside families to build on their strengths to find solutions to social, health, relationship or parenting difficulties, including multiple and complicated problems. The service aims to prevent problems from escalating thus reducing the need for more intensive and costly services at a later stage.

- 2.7 The service has six responsive teams based in neighbourhoods across Edinburgh. The service is managed on a city-wide basis by a manager and an assistant manager. Each neighbourhood team is led by a Senior Family Worker and includes a Family Worker as well as a number of Family Support Workers and volunteers.
- 2.8 The service works with families with children aged up to 13 years, who require a significant level of support to prevent difficulties from escalating in a variety of areas including:
- improving school attendance
  - reducing exclusions
  - routines, behaviour management
  - relationships
  - shared family experiences
  - housing, financial issues
  - employment
  - linking with community supports
- 2.9 Through dialogue, the family and the worker clarify and prioritise the areas that need attention, and then develop a support plan to achieve the family's goals. The service is flexible and adaptable to family life, routines and pressures. Drawing upon evidence from research, the help families receive is meaningful and practical whilst possibly challenging – but always supportive. Support is provided at the times when it is needed including outwith traditional office hours and at weekends, and from one consistent worker, focusing upon problems when they occur, so that realistic solutions can be found.
- 2.10 It is recognised that a number of third-sector agencies provide crucial support to families in Edinburgh and Family Solutions is working with the management of other services to avoid duplication and ensure that families receive the most appropriate help.
- 2.11 The Service was established in May 2013, and is now nearly fully staffed. Caseloads have been building up and by the end of October 2013 the service was working with 180 children and young people in 85 families. This is about half the anticipated capacity of the service and it is expected to be at full capacity early in 2014

### **Parent and Carer Support**

- 2.12 The Council and NHS Lothian have established a framework for the support of parents and carers. This framework is currently being refreshed. It represents a commitment to the principles in the National Parenting Framework, building on the recognition that families are the key matrix for healthy and positive child development, and that supporting parents to fulfil their role is both essential in achieving positive outcomes for children and young people, as well as being cost effective and sustainable. Implementation of Getting it Right for every child necessarily involves getting it right for parents and families.

- 2.13 The Parent and Carer Support Team was established to develop capacity and delivery of support to parents across the city. Their work has been given improved focus by aligning them to the Children's Services Management Groups who are charged at neighbourhood level with implementation of Getting it Right for Every Child. The team comprises five members of staff and a training officer developing awareness, skill and confidence across the workforce.
- 2.14 The team has built on the positive experience in three areas of the city where development officers have provided an audit of provision and gaps, established parent information points in libraries and schools, coordinated the availability of parenting programmes and the matching of parents appropriately to these programmes, and trained staff in various agencies in relation to parent support.
- 2.15 A specific goal of this team over the next year, working with the local Children's Services Management Groups will be to develop better responses for parents and families who are facing recognised difficulties and challenges.

### **Family Group Decision Making service**

- 2.16 The Family Group Decision Making service becomes involved in situations when there are questions about how a child can be cared for within a family, including in many cases a concern that the child may need to be removed and accommodated by the local authority.
- 2.17 The purpose of the service is to assist the wider family to make a family plan for the care of the child. The approach is to bring the extended family together, alongside professionals, to consider and decide on a response to the needs of child members of the family. It is often possible to find improved solutions for a child through involving all members of the family in this way.
- 2.18 The team was expanded with funding from the Early Years and Early Intervention Change fund, growing from 4 to 8 members by January 2013.
- 2.19 The work of the team involves researching and contacting members of the extended family and in some cases significant friends, achieving agreement to meet and then arranging and facilitating a family meeting. About 17 to 21 such meetings have been held each month.
- 2.20 Desired and actual outcomes from meetings vary in their focus. They can include agreeing contact arrangements where parents are separated, getting agreement for how a child's placement can be supported, or deciding who in a family the child will live with. 69% of 71 outcomes recently recorded over a 4 month period were relevant to preventing a child needing to be accommodated.

## **Young People's Service**

- 2.21 The Young People's Service has brought together under a single manager two existing services: The Integrated Community Support Service and the Youth Offending Service.
- 2.22 It has been recognised that there were a number of issues that required to be addressed in the way services were being delivered:
- The work of the Youth Offending Service, while triggered by offending behaviour was already addressing the wider needs of young people, and staff had the skills to help young people who were not primarily offenders.
  - The number of young people being reported for offending has been declining substantially over recent years: Comparing 2009/10 with 2012/13 there has been a 33% reduction in the number of young people and a 44% reduction in the number of offences referred by the Police. This has created an opportunity to widen the criteria for the group of young people the staff are able to work with.
  - There were elements of duplication and inefficiency in sustaining two separate services for young people.
- 2.23 In sum there are opportunities, through the amalgamation, to continue to meet the purposes for which these services have existed, while responding to other important concerns: the needs of a wider group of young people who may be running away, self-harming, truanting, etc. It is also expected that increasingly deploying family-focused approaches where appropriate will contribute to improvements in outcomes for young people.
- 2.24 One element in the new service that will not be changed is the commitment to working with young people who offend, sustaining the very successful developments of recent years. These include pre-referral screening which has reduced the number of referrals to the reporter on offence grounds by more than 62% since 2006/7 and the more recent "Whole Systems Approach" which seeks to provide a more appropriate response to young people over 16 who are offending.

## **Safer Families Edinburgh**

- 2.25 This service was formerly named *Working With Men*. It provides a service across Edinburgh to increase safety for women and children experiencing domestic abuse by engaging with men in relation to their behaviour and with women in relation to safety planning for themselves and their children. The majority of referrals are from children and families practice teams where there are concerns about the wellbeing of children.



- 2.26 The service is for families in which the man has not been convicted in court of domestic abuse. Because of the hurdles to be overcome in achieving conviction, such as under-reporting and difficulties in achieving evidence, this is a far larger population of men than those who have been so convicted.
- 2.27 When a man is put on probation by a court in relation to domestic abuse, the court has the option of making a condition of attendance at the Caledonian Edinburgh programme which provides a court-mandated probation service within the Department of Health and Social Care.
- 2.28 The service has a project manager, senior social worker, three men's workers and two women's workers in post. During 2012/13 the service worked with 94 men and 69 women and their children, of whom respectively 37 and 34 were new referrals.
- 2.29 A significant role for the service is in managing risk, which can often be significant. Staff members convene multi-agency risk management meetings in those cases.
- 2.30 The service provides training/consultancy for colleagues in Children and Families, and also for other agencies who deal with service users as victims or perpetrators of domestic abuse.
- 2.31 The Council received funding from the Scottish Government to allow Safer Families Edinburgh to establish a Polish language service. Two Polish speaking staff members were recruited to this service in the early Autumn. The new staff have been able to engage effectively with both men and women whose first language is Polish in cases which have been difficult for staff who do not speak that language.
- 2.32 Four members of staff in the service are trained in the specialist assessment of safe contact between parent and child in situations of domestic abuse.
- 2.33 In a partnership with the East Edinburgh Children and Families Practice Team, the service continues to develop best practice in child protection where there is domestic abuse, through reciprocal consultancy and mentoring.
- 2.34 Safer Families Edinburgh is delivering the *Caring Dads* programme: an intervention programme for men who have abused or neglected their children, or exposed them to the abuse of their mothers.

### **Multisystemic Therapy (MST)**

- 2.35 A Multi Systemic Therapy (MST) service has been introduced in Edinburgh, with two teams beginning operations from the end of May 2013 and being fully staffed (8 practitioners) by the end of August. The establishment of this service has been made possible with funding from the Early Years / Early Intervention Fund.

- 2.36 MST is an approach to significant teenage anti-social behaviour, with the goal of sustaining young people at home and in school. This has an extensive evidence base for its effectiveness in different countries, recently including England. The approach is being increasingly deployed in the UK. In England this is being supported by the Department of Health. MST Services are already in place in Fife, Glasgow and in Northern Ireland.
- 2.37 The approach is based on the recognition that the behaviour of a young person is influenced by his or her relationship with the environment including membership of peer groups, engagement or disengagement with school and the quality of relationships in the family.
- 2.38 A key worker with a small caseload of four or five families works intensively over a period of 3-5 months to help the parents or carers to take charge of those key environmental factors, promoting pro-social rather than anti-social behaviour, engagement in school and with pro-social peers. Support is available for families on a 24/7 basis.
- 2.39 MST is a licensed programme with stringent systems to ensure adherence by staff members to programme principles. These principles are designed to ensure maximum flexibility in responding to the unique circumstances of individual families while sustaining the daily focus of parents and carers on the steps and changes that they need to take.
- 2.40 The service is coming to the end of its work with the first cohort of families and will be able to report outcomes before the end of the year.

### **3. Recommendations**

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- 3.1 Committee is asked to note the content of this report and the plan to bring a further update report to Committee with performance information during 2014.

**Gillian Tee**

Director of Children and Families

## Links

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<b>Coalition pledges</b>	P1: Increase support for vulnerable children, including help for families so that fewer go into care.
<b>Council outcomes</b>	CO1: Our children have the best start in life, are able to make and sustain relationships and are ready to succeed CO2: Our children and young people are successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens making a positive contribution to their communities CO5: Our children and young people are safe from harm or fear of harm, and do not harm others within their communities
<b>Single Outcome Agreement</b>	SO3: Edinburgh's children and young people enjoy their childhood and fulfil their potential
<b>Appendices</b>	None