

SOCIAL & HEALTH CARE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Thursday 8 th June 2023
Report Subject	Flintshire Early Help Hub and Information Advice and Assistance Service
Cabinet Member	Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Social Services and Wellbeing
Report Author	Chief Officer (Social Services)
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Flintshire Public Service Board (PSB) commissioned the establishment of a multi-agency Early Help Hub (EHH). The aim of the EHH is to deliver more timely and appropriate early intervention and support to families with greater levels of need. This report provides an overview of the EHH, the response provided during the COVID pandemic and our newly developed Information, Advice and Assistance Service (IAA Service).

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	To support the ongoing work and commitment to the Early Help Hub as part of wider programme to support families experiencing trauma aligned to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's).
2	To support the newly developed Information, Advice and Assistance Service in providing support to families through skilled conversations which will clarify people's thoughts and explore their circumstances so we can understand "What Matters" most to them and how best to support them.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE FLINTSHIRE EARLY HELP HUB AND INFORMATION ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE SERVICE																												
1.01	<p>The EHH was developed in 2017. The service brings together agencies to target early support for families, who do not meet statutory thresholds for children’s social care, but have clear indicators of need, often aligned to ACE’s. The aim is to work with these families to build their resilience and prevent the escalation of need.</p>																												
1.02	<p>When the EHH was launched it consisted of Social Services, Police, Flintshire Local Voluntary Sector (FLVC), Health and Family Information Service.</p> <p>Over the years as the EHH has embedded into practice, and to meet the needs of families, additional agencies have joined. Currently we have Social Services, Police, Health, Education, Youth Justice, Action for Children, Action for Children Disability Service, Flintshire Local Voluntary Sector, Family Support Team, Domestic Abuse Safety Unit, Clwyd Alyn Womens Aid and Adult Mental Health.</p> <p>This multi-agency way of working brings together a whole family approach to establish a bespoke plan of support for our families.</p> <p>If the plan of support identifies 2 or more agencies to support the family, then Flintshire’s Team around the Family (TAF) will automatically become involved to coordinate those identified services on the families behalf.</p>																												
1.03	<p>Data (EHH)</p> <p>Since the commencement of the EHH in June 2017 we have received 12,611 referrals. The breakdown of referrals is detailed in the table below:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="304 1402 1369 1742"> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>Referrals</th> <th>Highest recorded area</th> <th>Highest recorded need (age)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2017</td> <td>460</td> <td>Holywell</td> <td>10-15</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2018</td> <td>1256</td> <td>Deeside</td> <td>10-15</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2019</td> <td>2507</td> <td>Deeside</td> <td>10-15</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2020</td> <td>2537</td> <td>Deeside</td> <td>10-15</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2021</td> <td>2872</td> <td>Deeside</td> <td>10-15</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2022</td> <td>2979</td> <td>Deeside</td> <td>10-15</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>The EHH Service works with children and young people 0-18 years of age. The majority of referrals to the EHH are for statutory school aged children aged between 10-15 and from the Deeside area. As we know from evidence that young people within this age are experiencing multiple changes from physical development, emotional, biological changes in friendship groups and environment.</p>	Year	Referrals	Highest recorded area	Highest recorded need (age)	2017	460	Holywell	10-15	2018	1256	Deeside	10-15	2019	2507	Deeside	10-15	2020	2537	Deeside	10-15	2021	2872	Deeside	10-15	2022	2979	Deeside	10-15
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1.04	<p>It is important to reflect that the EHH continued to operate during the COVID pandemic through alternative delivery models so that families</p>																												

continued to access early help during this challenging time. This approach reflects our ethos of offering the 'Right Support at the Right Time'.

Gathering feedback from colleagues and parents, the worries of isolation became apparent almost immediately. Lack of social opportunities, being isolated, children not attending school coupled with ever: increasing financial pressures we made sure that Early Help:

- Enhanced the virtual offer and telephone contacts with families
- Provided virtual Family Support Clinics in order for families to access the offer of advice and support across a spectrum of challenges they may have been facing.
- Continued to hold Early Help Hub meetings via Microsoft Teams.
- Continued to provide allocated Team around the Family Officers to families with multiple needs.
- Adapted the parenting group sessions to offer virtual support alongside one-to-one sessions.
- Continued offering Family Group Meetings in order to support statutory services and court proceedings and to mediate between separated parents.
- First point of contact for all head teachers to coordinate support and to make sure our most vulnerable families and children are seen.
- Supporting our child protection teams with face-to-face visits when a child is at risk of harm.

1.05 Over the years the demand for the service has significantly increased due to a number of factors:

- The success of the service
- Pandemic
- Financial / cost of living crisis.

Due to the above we have seen a significant increase in:

- Challenging behaviours in children
- Parental mental health
- Children and young people's mental health
- Relationship issues
- Domestic violence

In 20/21 a project was set up to look at the function and effectiveness of the EHH which included a review of:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many referrals with coming into the service via our front door • The type and quality of referral and what decisions were being made • The journey of the referral and what actions/decisions were being made along its way. • The families experience of the service and associated outcomes <p>It was noted that timely decisions were being made but, due to demand, families were increasingly having to wait to access services thus risking the family going into crisis and the possibility needing statutory intervention.</p> <p>In late 2022 a series of work shops were set up with partner agencies, parents and young people to see if we could integrate some of our colleagues (the experts) into a single front door which support families by identifying needs through a ‘What Matters’ conversation. This early conversation enables a detailed understanding of family circumstances.</p>
1.06	<p>This work led to the development of our Information, Advice and Assistance (IAA) Service which has been designed to provide a swift response in supporting our front door statutory partners, including schools, police, health and early years to support families based on ‘what matters’ to the family.</p> <p>The IAA Service was developed in late 2022 and became operational in February 2023. The service (IAA) provides support to families through skilled conversations which works with families to explore their circumstances, thoughts, challenges, dilemmas and solutions to understand “What Matters” most to them and how best to help them.</p> <p>The IAA Service consists of 9 Team around the Family Officers operating on a duty system, 1 family worker, 1 FLVC member, 1 health representative and a Housing Representative.</p> <p>Referrals that do not meet threshold for safeguarding are passed to IAA Service. Each representative will contact the family to explore their circumstances to understand “What Matters” to them and how best to help them by either; -</p> <p>Giving information - to provide families, young people and professionals with information that helps them make informed decisions regarding their wellbeing. This will include the social care system, direct payments and early help resources.</p> <p>Providing advice – This involves working with people to undertake a proportionate assessment and a discussion on the options available to find them the best solution. To provide this advice staff need to have an understanding of both statutory and non-statutory services.</p> <p>Providing assistance – If needs cannot be addressed by giving information and advice then a more thorough assessment of need is required. This may lead to a statutory assessment to determine their eligibility to more formal care and support.</p> <p>Early indicators are showing that this approach to providing early</p>

	<p>information and advice is meeting the needs of most families and reducing the number of families who need wider and more comprehensive support through our Early Help Hub. Those families who do need support through the EHH are provided with a thorough assessment to determine need and enable their case to be referred on direct to the most appropriate EHH partner without the need for a EHH meeting</p> <p>The EHH which met twice weekly has now reduced to once per week and supports families with more complex needs that need that multi-agency oversight and coordination.</p> <p>The EHH is also used as an exit strategy/step down from statutory services when families want continued engagement from services. This service is being promoted during Source and Resource Panel (SARP), and team meetings so Social Workers can present their cases at EHH to see if community resources can support following statutory closure.</p>
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2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS/ CHALLENGES
2.01	<p>The EHH/IAA service continues to demonstrate value for money and working alongside partners in both statutory, third sector and commissioned services (Family First) and we aim to measure long term well-being and sustained impact following our intervention. This alongside local data enables us to predict demand to inform commissioning accordingly. Although these measures work well there are areas where resources cannot keep up with demand. Specifically, coming out of the pandemic we have seen an increase in mental health and domestic violence referrals into the service. There is high demand on resources that support in these areas and capacity to meet need is stretched. The EHH is taking a proactive approach to support children, young people and parents where there are waiting times for specialist services provided by other agencies. This includes remodelling some of the functions with our teams to meet these needs.</p>

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
3.01	<p>Welsh Government funding has been made available to secure key posts within the EHH/IAA including additional capacity for Team Around the Family (TAF), BCUHB and FLVC. This funding is time limited and cannot be guaranteed on a reoccurring basis. This risk will remain an item for management through the project group structure.</p>

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	<p>The EHH has been developed in close consultation with partner agencies. Agencies have been involved in the design and development of the EHH through an operational project group and a strategic overview group.</p> <p>The newly developed IAA Service is working closely with partner agencies</p>

	<p>to embed this new resource into its structure. This is currently ongoing.</p> <p>We will continue to consult with children, young people and families through events and evaluation of services.</p>
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5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	None.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	None.

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	<p>Contact Officer: Jane Turvey Telephone: 01352 701128 E-mail: Jane.L.turvey@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	<p>Public Services Board – Established under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 the purpose of Public Services Boards (PSBs) is to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being in its area by strengthening joint working across all public services in Wales. The Flintshire PSB is made up of senior leaders from a number of public and voluntary organisations. Together these organisations are responsible for developing and managing the Well-being Plan for Flintshire.</p> <p>Adverse Childhood Experiences – ACE’s are traumatic experiences that occur before the age of 18 and are remembered throughout adulthood. These experiences range from suffering verbal, mental, sexual and physical abuse, to being raised in a household where domestic violence, alcohol abuse, parental separation or drug abuse is present.</p> <p>Team Around the Family – The Team around the Family offer advice, help and support to families with support needs. TAF bring together the support from people and/or organisations to help families. The support offered is aimed at building a family’s resilience and coping mechanisms alongside coordination on the families behalf.</p> <p>Flintshire Local Voluntary Council – FLVC is the umbrella and support organisation for over 1200 voluntary and community groups based in Flintshire.</p> <p>Information advice and Assistance Service – The Social Services and</p>

	<p>Well Being (Wales) Act 2014 came into effect on 6th April 2016. Wellbeing and prevention are at the centre of the Act and the provision of a IAA Service will ensure voice, choice and control for people in meeting their personal outcomes.</p>
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