

Early Help Evaluation

Summary Report – Report 1

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1. Background

Leicestershire

Leicestershire is committed to supporting the improvement of outcomes for its residents. The challenge is to achieve this against a backdrop of reduced budgets and increasing demands to services where the pressure on resources will continue to increase. There is a need to refocus the work of the council's Early Help services to reduce demand on services in line with these budgets reductions.

Scope

This evaluation covers Early Help families which were supported by a case worker from the Supporting Leicestershire Families Service and Children's Centre's who received an assessed service during 2013 and 2017.

Links with National Troubled Families Programme

This evaluation recognises and acknowledges wider evaluation activity associated with the National Troubled Families programme due to the large cross over of families within both cohorts.

The current position for Leicestershire partnership self-assessment against the six strands of the Troubled Families Service Transformation Maturity Model is as below:

Family experience of transformed services	Developing
Leadership	Early
Strategy	Early
Culture	Developing
Workforce development	Developing
Delivery structures and processes	Developing

Contributions

Over 100 families consisting of almost 500 individuals¹ and over 50 partners contributed their voice towards this evaluation. In addition there have been significant contributions from over 100 staff in the Early Help Service.

¹ Anonymised in all reports

Key Areas of Need

Workers regularly collect 57 indicators of need. The following needs are prevalent at the start of the Early Help intervention in over 50% of Early Help cases in the evaluation cohort;

- Parenting difficulties (78%)
- A heavy reliance on benefits (65%)
- Low-level adult mental health (64%)
- Work-related benefits (62%)
- Single parent families (60%)
- Other adult mental health (59%)
- Negative child lifestyle (57%)
- Financial difficulties (56%)
- Unstable/disruptive family relationships (54%)
- Violent or aggressive behaviour in children (53%)
- Adult domestic abuse victims (52%)

More Information

Outcomes are also captured by workers using an outcomes tool called Family Star Plus². For further information see

APPENDIX 1A – FAMILY STAR

CHAPTER 10 – RESULTS – FAMILIES PROGRESS

REPORT 5 – UNDERSTANDING DEMAND BETTER

REPORT 6 – THEORY OF CHANGE AND THEORY OF ACTION

For further information on objectives of the Evaluation and the Early Help Service see

REPORT 7 – TECHNICAL REPORT

² Burns, S & MacKeith, J. (2013) The Family Star Plus User Guide and The Family Star Plus: Organisation Guide, Brighton: Triangle Consulting

2. Report Structure

There are seven reports making up the evaluation of Early Help case work as below:

Table 1 – Early Help Evaluation Reports

Report Title	Description of Report Contents	Pages
Report 1 – Summary report	A summary of the key findings (this report)	48
Report 2 – What Families Say	Families perspective of Leicestershire County Council’s Early Help service – in-depth insight into what families value and what could be different	122
Report 3 – Early Help key worker confidence survey	Leicestershire County Council’s caseworkers level of confidence against a number of key requirements of their role in supporting families ³	17
Report 4 – Multi agency and other asset based strengths	A multi-agency perspective of Leicestershire County Council’s Early Help service and further in-depth insight from families into multi-agencies as well as other asset based strengths and deficiencies within families and communities	191
Report 5 – Understanding demand better	In-depth analysis of nine different groups of Early Help families - Understanding how their needs interrelate and which families make the most and least progress	113
Report 6 – Theory of change and theory of action	Provides information on the theory of change and theory of action underpinning the Early Help evaluation and some further detailed findings around families progress around key domains where change is measured	150
Report 7 – Technical report	Background and technical details of the scope and methods used to inform the evaluation	37

³ Additional worker feedback can be found in report 2 & 4

3. Objectives

The purpose of this evaluation is to explore and understand from the perspective of family, partner and staff experience:

- What has been working in Leicestershire since May 2013
- What needs to be improved or done differently to support:
 - Staff and service development
 - Transformation
 - Commissioning
 - Delivery of services

Which will:

- Most likely improve the outcomes of families requiring Early Help support

The evaluation also aims to provide:

- An understanding of what works for what types of families:
 - In what circumstances
 - Why it works and;
- When things do not appear to go well or improve:
 - Why that might be

The evaluation of the Early Help casework provides an evidence base on which to understand:

- What is working well
- What needs to be developed
- How the Early Help service might be transformed, and;
- Identify which families the service could be working with in the future

More Information

For further information on objectives of the Evaluation and the Early Help Service see **REPORT 7 – TECHNICAL REPORT**

4. Methods

A total of 5,486 families (and over 20,000 individuals) were identified as being supported by a case-worker from the Early Help Service during the evaluation period of 2013 to 2017. A large portion of families did not have sufficient data to be included across all methodologies, for example due to the length and nature of the intervention or due to the nature of the research methodology.

To summarise, the key methods used to inform this evaluation include:

- Evaluation design - including development of the Theory of Change and Theory of Action
- Family Star Plus⁴ (measuring progress)
- 57 indicators assessed and collected by workers – Identifying need
- Cluster analysis (need)
- Cluster analysis (progress)
- CHAID analysis (progress)
- Parent voice (in-depth interviews and journey maps)
- Parent voice (surveys)
- Child and young person's voice (pop up event)
- Child voice - pre and non-verbal children (worker observations)
- Survey of staff⁵
- Most Significant Change (staff)⁶
- Most Significant Change (partners)
- Case studies
- Analysis of stuck cases
- Stakeholder analysis
- Stakeholder participation

⁴ Burns, S & MacKeith, J. (2013) The Family Star Plus User Guide and The Family Star Plus: Organisation Guide, Brighton: Triangle Consulting

⁵ Bandura (1997)

⁶ Davies R and Dart J (2005) The 'Most Significant Change' (MSC) Technique: A Guide to Its Use. Available at: <http://mande.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/MSCGuide.pdf>

More information

For further information on Family Star Plus, see

APPENDIX 1A

For a short summary of the methodologies used and the number of participants and cases used for each methodology see

APPENDIX 1B

For an example of the in-depth journey maps supporting this evaluation see

APPENDIX 1C – MANDY’S JOURNEY MAP

For detail of the further 14 in-depth journey maps supporting this evaluation see

REPORT 5 – UNDERSTANDING DEMAND BETTER

For more detailed information around needs, demographics, other characteristics and progress see

APPENDIX 1D – SUPPORTING INFORMATION AROUND KEY FINDINGS

REPORT 5 – UNDERSTANDING DEMAND BETTER

For more detailed information on the methodologies used and background see

REPORT 7 – TECHNICAL REPORT

5. Executive Summary

5.1 Conclusions and Key Takeaway Points

Context

- 1. The families being supported by a caseworker from Leicestershire County Council's Early Help Service have a diverse and complex range of needs.**

There are significantly more single parent families and families living in social housing, requiring support from the Early Help Service than the Leicestershire average. Leicestershire families need Early Help support in particular around parenting and their mental health, finances, domestic abuse and SEND related issues. Multi-agency support and development is key to families being provided with the right support.

Effectiveness of the Council's Early Help Service

- 2. The Early Help Service is an effective, highly valued and innovative service established in 2013 in response to the Troubled Families agenda.**

Early Help casework focuses around an evidence based multi-agency/key worker approach. The service is highly valued by families and partners. In addition, it is significant that staff have extremely high levels of confidence in being able to effect change for complex families with diverse needs (ranging from 93% to 100% average levels of confidence for 'all or most of the time' across eleven key activities and approaches). Where progress is measured, 72% of families make progress in one or more of ten domains. The service has worked with families across Leicestershire with some of the most complex problems and the majority of families sustain changes when they are no longer supported by the service and 67% aren't re-referred to the Early Help service.

A key finding from the evaluation

The impact of Early Help support in relation to social care referrals is significant. Notably 68% of families had involvement with social care prior to Early Help support and this drops to 25% during intervention and 38% after the case is closed

Areas for Improvement

- 3. There are a number of findings documented throughout the detailed evaluation reports which provide Early Help management with a robust evidence base on which to transform the service further.**

Detailed findings include statistical and qualitative evidence on which to base decisions around step ups, length of involvement, assessment (including presenting factors which are significant in influencing needs and outcomes), re-referral, appropriateness of service being offered and measurement.

Key findings from the evaluation

Some high needs families are less likely to make sufficient progress under the current Early Help offer. One of these groups⁷ features victims of adult and child domestic abuse and whilst half of these families make higher progress than the overall, the other half of these families are significantly more likely than the overall to have social care involvement after the Early Help intervention. What is also interesting about this group overall is that 95% have or have had teenage parents (significantly higher than other groups). They are also significantly more likely to have children with violent and aggressive behaviour, school behaviour issues, children with child development concerns, learning difficulties, low level mental health and other SEND issues, poor parenting and unstable and disruptive relationships in the household. In addition, 64% of this group are also single parent families, 50% are re-referred to Early Help, 45% have children's social care involvement during the intervention and 45% have Early Help involvement for over a year (which is significantly higher than other groups). These families are also more likely to start and end with lower Family Star Plus⁸ readings. Ending with lower Family Star Plus readings is a significant characteristic of the 12% of families that went on to have a child protection plan after the intervention.

Of the families in this group that make higher progress than the overall, whilst there are no statistically significant findings in relation to specific needs or other characteristics, one of the cases in the detailed reports highlights some factors that are notable.

“Kristy” was abandoned by her mum at 18 months and lived with her violent dad and drug dealing extended family until she was 13 when she became a looked after child with multiple difficult placements. A parent at 18, having four children with four different dads, Kristy and her children experienced significant domestic abuse and difficult encounters with the criminal justice system, social care, the school and their community.

Kristy felt *“alright [about Early Help support] because I needed that support to be honest. I couldn't keep kicking off”*. Kristy was ready, welcoming and accepting of the Early Help intervention. She valued her worker supporting her in meetings, with forms and spending long lengths of time talking to her and helping her to see things from a different perspective. Kristy valued the support her worker gave her practically and emotionally around her own mental health and diagnosis of ADHD and her son's SEND diagnosis and support to get him onto an EHCP Plan. Kristy also valued having courses that got her out of the house, help around finances such as accessing DLA and with budgeting, being flexible around what Kristy and her family needed support with, general praise and encouragement, support from the police and school. Kristy's worker ensured Kristy had support in place when the case closed through a school family support worker and from the GREAT project. Kristy has not re-entered the Social Care, Early Help or Criminal Justice system and says *“I've totally changed”*.

⁷ Cluster D

⁸ Burns, S & MacKeith, J. (2013) The Family Star Plus User Guide and The Family Star Plus: Organisation Guide, Brighton: Triangle Consulting. See Appendix for further details

4. There is an opportunity for strategic leads across Leicestershire to come together to review the evidence, considering how the issues can be better addressed collectively to improve outcomes for families in Leicestershire (*particularly for families with higher needs and where their trajectory is likely to end up resulting in higher cost services across the system, such as in social care, health and the criminal justice system*).

Meeting needs and supporting outcomes for Leicestershire’s families is not the sole responsibility of the council’s Early Help Service and despite the Early Help Service providing a good foundation in supporting many families diverse and complex needs there are structural issues which require addressing. There is an opportunity for the wider system to have a different response to families requiring support, meeting unmet needs and improving outcomes for families not making sufficient progress under the current offer and structure.

Did you know?

The Troubled Families Programme requires Local Authorities to undertake a self-assessment against six domains in its Service Transformation Maturity Model with a rating of “Early”, “Developing”, “Maturing” and “Mature”. For Leicestershire the partnership self-assessment for the majority of domains is “**Developing**”. A collective response to the system structure will likely support improving Leicestershire’s position to “Maturing”.

It is significant that Leicestershire partners were involved in Leicestershire’s self-assessment illustrating agencies across Leicestershire wanting to work together and develop practice. Areas of Leicestershire’s self-assessment where there were elements of “Maturing” included family experience and workforce development.

5.2 Outcomes

A wide range of outcomes are being achieved for families being supported by a case-worker from the Early Help Service, most notably around their health, mental health and wellbeing, parenting and relationships, education and SEND, keeping them safer and reducing social care involvement:

Afia feels if she hadn't have got the support; things would have been much more stressful. "That stress would have affected my health and that would have impacted on the whole family"

Afia, age 40

"Since we've made all the changes with our son and his behaviour has got better his younger brother's been more affectionate to him. I think we talk differently to him now, like when he's doing stuff he shouldn't we think more about how much he can understand and what he might be feeling so we can deal with it with that in mind while still putting in the boundaries"

Parent feedback

"My worker helps me with my anger issues. She helps me listen to my mum"

Child/young person's feedback

With her workers support Mandy gets May referred to the paediatrician through the doctors. May meets the criteria for a CAMHs referral. Her worker also "applies to get SENDIASS involved, Menphys SOS and DLA for James...family funding for sensory items...a trampoline...timers.....she puts a lot of things in place, all of which help"

"She comes to James's appointments, even a three hour sensory one...ADHD behaviour workshops...our worker wants to learn and finds it interesting"

Mandy, age 47

"Our worker has brought us out of a crazy place we were heading"

Parent feedback

Isobel feels if she hadn't have got the support from Early Help, things "wouldn't have been good...I definitely wouldn't be in a better place...it was the kick up the bum I needed...I would have been involved with social services again"

Isobel, age 38

Sofia wants her ex-partner to take her to court around contact with Sebastian. "I know for a fact he'll have to see me at the Children's Centre because it's a contact centre and that will put my mind at rest. I know the staff that work there. I know he'd be safe but I also know he won't do that"

Sofia, age 28

By enabling improved relationships and parenting, mental health and wellbeing, making improvements to families' financial and home situation, getting families the right multi-agency support across key domains and building on family strengths, the following key impacts and outcomes are being achieved for families by the Early Help Service:

1. Families are healthier, in particular around their mental health and wellbeing;
2. Children and young people have improved educational prospects;
3. Families are significantly safer;
4. Parents and young people make progress towards work and many go into work or apprenticeships;
5. Families are less isolated;
6. There are improvements to children's behaviour and development;
7. Parents are able to control their anger;
8. In general, families have a much improved future outlook; and
9. More costly services are averted, particularly in relation to health, social care and the police.

As well as multi-agency support and families own qualities and support networks, some key enablers to the outcomes above have also been identified, which could also be seen as outcomes in their own right:

1. There are improvements to parenting;
2. Family relationships have improved;
3. Families see positive change;
4. There are positive changes to families' home environments (including house moves);
5. There are improvements to families financial situation;
6. There are sanctions and orders imposed which are perceived as positive;
7. Families receive health diagnosis;
8. Parental changes are made to the child/young person's home environment which is perceived as positive e.g. child moves in with a different parent or family member; and
9. Children move schools or become home educated (because their needs weren't being met at their original provision)

Further work is required to understand why families feel home schooling is their only option as this could be seen as system failure.

Further work is required locally to obtain hard administrative data such as health, housing provider and police data to better evidence outcomes across the system.

5.3 Barriers to Families Making Progress

There are a wide range of needs and issues which act as barriers to families making progress most notably intergenerational issues, life events, set-backs, unsupportive communities and community environments.

One of the key barriers to progress is that families do not receive help early enough, often because they do not seek or accept help for themselves (often due to fear such as fear of sex abuse and domestic abuse perpetrators and fear of children being removed by social care) or because services miss opportunities to identify and provide earlier help. This leads to issues escalating and becoming more complex to address and behaviours becoming more entrenched.

5.4 Enablers of Families Making Progress

Families make progress when they acknowledge that they need help, they accept support and follow advice being given and when they have a wider support network, which can include family, their wider community and other services.

On the whole families have a very positive experience with the Early Help Service. The support is often intense but led by family need. The flexible, practical and emotional support directly provided by a dedicated worker to the whole family through home and school visits, groups, courses, activities and other appointments (alongside Early Help multi-agency working and wider support in the system) helps support families to address their needs and where needed, helps families to make sustainable changes.

Early Help staff have high levels of confidence around a number of key areas which affect change for families, and families often have positive experiences with other multi-agencies.

5.5 Progress Made with Families is Not Equal

Four high-level groups of families were identified based around their combination of needs which break down further to make a total of nine groups as below:

Table 1a – A breakdown of different family groups by needs

Family group	1. Adults requiring support		2. Domestic abuse families		3. Lower needs families		4. SEND families		
	A LOW	B HIGH	C LOW	D HIGH	E LOW	F HIGH	G LOW	H MID	I HIGH
Group and level of need									

In addition to different combinations of needs, families are also referred into the service with a wide range of different starting points and whilst progress is made across all nine groups, relative to each other, some groups make more or less progress, have different end points at the close of their case, some are more likely to receive social care involvement after the intervention, some require different lengths of involvement and some are less likely to be re-referred than others.

5.6 Areas for Improvement

There are a number of areas that need addressing to improve outcomes for families, often related to the wider system. These include:

- Multi-agency development which may include better communication and strategic and structural development of services with partners
- Investment in Early Help and preventative services
- Better support relating to:
 - Family mental health
 - Domestic abuse
 - SEND, development and learning disability
 - Single parent families and families with limited support networks
- Addressing poverty, issues with social housing and providing better support around financial difficulties
- Addressing specific issues raised by families, staff and partners in relation to the Early Help service provided by the council
- Looking at wider opportunities – for example with universal services
- Improvements to whole family working, data quality and collection

The detail contained in the Early Help evaluation reports identify issues which may help more effective targeting of Early Help Services in the future including those families more likely to have social care involvement after the Early Help intervention. It also identifies which groups of families are most likely to be at risk of not receiving support in the future in the current model should thresholds rise under the current service delivery model, which includes lower-needs families presenting financial difficulties and where black and minority ethnic groups are present.

More Information

For more specific detail of the outcomes identified using each methodology see

APPENDIX 1C – MANDY’S JOURNEY MAP

- Parent voice (journey map)

APPENDIX 1D – SUPPORTING INFORMATION AROUND KEY FINDINGS

- Identifying need
- Family Star⁹
- Cluster analysis (need)
- Cluster analysis (progress)
- CHAID analysis (progress)
- Analysis of stuck cases

REPORT 2 – WHAT FAMILIES SAY

- Parent voice
- Children and young people’s voice
- Most Significant Change (staff) and worker observation

REPORT 3 – KEY WORKER CONFIDENCE SURVEY

- Staff survey
- Most Significant Change (staff)

REPORT 4 – MULTI-AGENCY AND OTHER ASSET BASED STRENGTHS

- Most Significant Change (partners)
- Parent voice
- Children and young people’s voice
- Most Significant Change (staff) and worker observations
- Case Studies

REPORT 5 – UNDERSTANDING DEMAND BETTER

- Family Star Plus
- Identifying need
- Cluster analysis (need)
- Cluster analysis (progress)
- CHAID analysis (progress)
- Parent voice (journey maps)

REPORT 6 – THEORY OF CHANGE AND THEORY OF ACTION

- Theory of Change and Theory of Action
- Family Star
- Cluster analysis (progress)
- CHAID analysis (progress)
- Most Significant Change (staff)

⁹ Burns, S & MacKeith, J. (2013) The Family Star Plus User Guide and The Family Star Plus: Organisation Guide, Brighton: Triangle Consulting

6. What Are the Barriers to Families Making Progress

In summary, families have a wide range of (often) complex issues and un-met needs, support is not being provided early enough and families do not seek help early enough, services miss opportunities to identify and provide help earlier and there are some specific issues with the Early Help service being provided and wider service provision across multi-agencies.

6.1 Issues and Needs

Intergenerational issues, life events, set-backs, unsupportive communities and community environments

The analysis identified the following key barriers to change:

- Life events and set-backs;
- Poor mental health and isolation;
- Negative upbringing;
- Negative relationships;
- A lack of family, peer and community support;
- Lack of knowledge and experience around parenting issues;
- Negative family qualities such as denial, motivation to change, trust of services, fear;
- Other parent issues such as stresses about housing, money or family disabilities; and
- Cultural issues

Recommendation

Develop an updated evidence base/literature review of what works in Early Help and early intervention alongside emerging evidence of the importance of recognising and developing interventions to address Adverse Childhood Experiences

6.2 Support is not provided to Families Early Enough

For the majority of families receiving support from Early Help, their needs are more complex than they might have been because they did not receive help when they needed it at the earliest opportunity. As those needs did not get met in the wider system, families' issues and needs changed, became increasingly complex, more costly to deal with, behaviours more entrenched¹⁰ and more difficult (although not impossible) to effect sustainable change.

Recommendation

That the Early Help Partnership take a collective response to the detailed findings in the evaluation reports and ownership of the recommendations

¹⁰ Evidenced by 33% re-referral rates in Leicestershire

6.3 Families Do Not Seek or Accept Help Early Enough

Earlier acknowledgement and ‘hand raising’ by families themselves is often lacking because of fear, for example, fear of child sex abuse and domestic abuse perpetrators and fear of children being taken away by social services.

Early help can also be inhibited by parents’ own gaps in knowledge and resistance to support, for some, due to their own upbringing.

6.4 Services Miss Opportunities to Identify and Address Help Earlier

Many universal services ‘miss’ opportunities to identify and address help earlier. There are also other service gaps, including those relating to thresholds and waiting lists, as well as a lack of skills and knowledge across services to meet the multiple needs of these families.

6.5 There are Specific Issues Identified with the Early Help Service

6.5.1 From Families Perspective

Whilst on the whole the family experiences are positive there are areas that could be different. Areas specifically identified by families included:

- Earlier support;
- A better understanding around mental health issues;
- Some specific feedback in relation to groups, courses and activities;
- Some specific feedback with regards to families’ relationships with workers;
- Improvements around whole family working;
- More time with workers;
- Worker’s providing more feedback around their family’s progress

Whilst many families feel self-sufficient at the end of the intervention, for some there are some key issues that remain unresolved, some of which sits outside of the Early Help Service remit.

6.5.2 From Staff Perspective

Whilst on the whole staff had high levels of confidence across a number of key areas, they had relatively lower average levels of confidence around specific areas such as:

- Sourcing and accessing items which help around transport issues e.g. bikes
- Supporting, advising and encouraging families to deal with:
 - Negative friendships
 - Substance misuse
 - Getting referrals (and subsequent diagnosis) by health professionals
 - Criminal behaviour
 - E-safety

- Risky sexual behaviours and sexual health issues*¹¹
- Child sex exploitation*
- Resolving transport issues*
- Understanding the financial benefits of working*
- Issues in families existing work and jobs*
- Families mental health issues
- Bullying and harassment
- Post 16 plans*
- Capturing pre-verbal and non-verbal children’s voice
- Accessing courses around family learning and e-safety
- Working up plans and strategies when children moved and visited another parent
- Improving relationships with family members and other people in their network
- Changing schools or looking at alternative education provision if appropriate
- Moving house

Staff had the lowest average level of confidence providing support, advice and encouragement around Educational Health Care Plans (EHCP)* and getting respite for carers (including young carers)*.

6.5.3 From Partner’s Perspective

Whilst on the whole, partners were positive about the Early Help Service they identified a number of issues with workers and the service mostly relating to communication.

Partners’ main suggestions for improving Early Help were:

- Improving communication
- Looking at case needs more closely
- Development of multi-agency working
- Quicker response times when families require Early Help (including thresholds and expanding the service to take in more families)

Recommendations

1. That the positive feedback from families is noted and the management team look at the family feedback report in more detail to identify areas for more targeted training and development
2. That the high levels of confidence staff have in affecting change with families is noted and the management team look at the staff feedback report and dashboards in more detail to identify areas for more targeted training and development, which may also include specific training to staff less confident in challenging families and other professionals
3. That the positive feedback from partners is noted and the management team look at the multi-agency feedback report in more detail to identify areas for development

¹¹ 50% of the responses fell below 70% level of confidence

More Information

For more detailed information on areas identified by families that could be different see **REPORT 2 – WHAT FAMILIES SAY**

For more detailed information on areas where staff felt relatively less confident see **REPORT 3 – KEY WORKER CONFIDENCE SURVEY**

For more detailed information on areas identified by multi-agencies that could be different see

REPORT 4 – MULTI-AGENCY AND OTHER ASSET BASED STRENGTHS

6.6 There Are Specific Issues Identified across Multi-Agencies

6.6.1. In Summary

Families have mixed experiences with multi-agencies across the system. Some families have very good experiences and some have less positive experiences.

Overall Recommendation Across Multi-Agencies

1. That the Early Help partnership working continues and is developed further with organisations and communities using key insights from this evaluation. This includes improving communication with partners and a specific recommendation from the national Troubled Families evaluation for Leicestershire to develop more support for families from the Third Sector
2. That the insight gathered for this evaluation informs service delivery and the wider system transformation (including where families might be more appropriately supported by other services)
3. That the Early Help Partnership take a collective response to the detailed findings in the evaluation reports and ownership of the recommendations

The key areas where families have less positive experiences include:

6.6.2 Social Care

- Families' negative perception of social care including a lack of whole family working and keeping children safe
- Families' fear being honest about their issues, particularly fear of children being removed
- Families' previous negative experiences with social care
- Issues with thresholds, caseloads and referrals and wider support to adults

6.6.3 Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing

Many families have negative experiences with pregnancy, labour and post-labour including postnatal depression, some of which isn't picked up at the time.

Across a range of health issues, families want:

- Earlier diagnosis

- Shorter waiting and referral times
- Lower thresholds for some health services

Families also cite specific issues with the provision of some services including CAMHS, counselling, GPs and paediatricians. Families also cite particular issues with attitudes and understanding from some health professionals and issues around prescribed medication.

Recommendation

That the Early Help service is developed further to better support parent and child mental health. In particular, where thresholds are too low to meet health service thresholds and where waiting times are lengthy or there are gaps in mental health service provision

6.6.4 Education and SEND

There are a wide range of areas families feel could be improved. These primarily relate to:

- General support around SEND including SEND provision and getting diagnosis
- SEND transport
- Issues where families are threatened with attendance sanctions whilst undergoing diagnosis

There is a lack of adequate educational placements and often families feel that home schooling or alternative provision is their only option. In general families identify issues including:

- Children feeling bullied and isolated
- Attitudes and understanding in some areas
- Communication with schools

Parent's own negative experiences with education and parent's mental health can also impact on relationships with school.

Recommendation

That the Early Help service is developed further to support families where SEND is present. In particular, understanding:

- Why some SEND families make significantly lower progress than others;
- Where there are staff gaps in skill or knowledge;
- Where thresholds are too low to meet SEND service thresholds;
- Where waiting times are lengthy or there are gaps in SEND provision; and
- Where short term support around particular SEND issues, including undiagnosed SEND would be helpful to families (including courses)

6.6.5 Finance and Employment

Many families have access to credit that isn't affordable or they get quickly into debt due to changes in their benefit situations and delays in resolving these. Families also experience inadequate support around their debt and finances.

Families have barriers that stop them obtaining jobs including the affordability of work e.g. childcare, their health, mental health and SEND related issues, issues with employers and other practical reasons.

Recommendation

That the evidence also found in the DWP Improving Lives report is noted and actions taken forward. *A multi-agency development may include making debt advice and welfare rights more accessible*

6.6.6 Criminal Justice System

Some families have negative experiences with certain areas of the Criminal Justice System however this feedback was limited which may be due to relatively lower levels of need in these areas compared to others.

6.6.7 Housing

There are a large proportion of families supported by Early Help in social housing and families experience unsuitable or unstable housing environments. Families identify some issues with the approaches taken by housing services including understanding, speed of moves and issues with priority bandings, and families also get into large rent and council tax arrears.

6.6.8 Domestic Abuse Services

Very few families spoke about support being given to their children in relation to the domestic abuse they had witnessed, despite their children showing aggressive and violent behaviours themselves. There were also specific issues raised by families in relation to domestic abuse support.

Recommendation

That the Early Help service is developed further to support families where domestic abuse is present, particularly in relation to supporting children, young people and teenage parents who have been exposed to domestic abuse. Additional preventative work targeting young people and people most at risk of unhealthy relationships should also be considered

6.6.9 Third Sector Services

There were a few examples raised in relation to awareness and limitations of third sector service provision.

6.6.10 Other

There was limited feedback from families around substance misuse, fire and rescue services and other specific services which may be due to relatively lower levels of need in these areas compared to others.

Whilst many families feel self-sufficient at the end of the intervention, for some their issues remain unresolved, often around other multi-agencies remit such as education and SEND or around their family relationships and mental health.

Partners also identified other multi-agency barriers to change including social care thresholds, families not being provided with help at an earlier opportunity and other service gaps and issues within the wider system.

More Information

For more detailed information on multi-agency areas identified by families that could be different see

REPORT 4 – MULTI-AGENCY AND OTHER ASSET BASED STRENGTHS

7. What Enables Families to Make Progress

7.1 When Families Acknowledge Issues and Have Good Support

For families and communities, things work well when they acknowledge their issues; accept support and when they have a wider support network which can include family, friends, other community and multi-agency support. Multi-agency understanding and attitudes improve when families are engaged.

7.2 Families Have a Positive Experience with the Council's Early Help Service

On the whole, families have a very positive experience of the Early Help service and recognise whole family working. Families mostly recognised support from their Early Help key worker but many also recognise support from multi-agencies. Families' value:

- Having good relationships with their key worker;
- Time;
- Whole family and multi-agency working;
- Family voice;
- Visits to home and school;
- Getting children and adults involved in groups, courses and activities (in welcoming buildings and environments);
- Helping them with relationships;
- Pointing them in the right direction, generally and in relation to parenting, finance and debt, employment, housing and their housing environment;
- Support around education and SEND, health, mental health and wellbeing, substance misuse, domestic abuse;
- With appointments e.g. health appointments and school meetings;
- Obtaining items e.g. household goods;
- With reassurance, praise, encouragement and helping them to see change happen;
- Flexibility;
- Persistence and challenge;
- Helping keep them and their families safe;
- Support with sanctions and other practical and emotional support

Many families feel self-sufficient at the end of the intervention. Whilst some families aren't ready or don't want the support to end, having support available after the intervention is particularly welcomed, for example in groups, being able to contact their worker should an issue arise or support through other agencies, some of which is set up or identified by their worker before closing their case.

Recommendation

That the positive feedback from families is noted and the management team look at the family feedback report in more detail to identify areas for more targeted training and development

More Information

For more detailed information on family experience with the council’s Early Help service where things could be different, see

REPORT 2 – WHAT FAMILIES SAY

7.3 Staff Confidence to Affect Change

On the whole, staff had an average high level of confidence in being able to effect change with families across a wide range of areas including:

- Gaining trust and building relationships with families
- Persevering with families
- Having the ability to question and challenge families
- Advocating on behalf of families
- Acknowledging and praising family’s progress
- Observing families
- Being flexible with families
- Working with the whole family
- Understanding the order in which things need to happen
- Challenging other professionals
- Providing support, advice and encouragement to families to do things
- Working up plans and strategies
- Undertaking one to one and joint visits with other professionals and other people
- Family voice meetings
- Practical help
 - Sourcing and obtaining items for families
 - Helping families do things

Recommendation

That the high levels of confidence staff have in affecting change with families is noted and the management team look at the staff feedback report and dashboards in more detail to identify areas for more targeted training and development

More Information

For more detailed information on levels of staff confidence across a number of key areas including where things could be different, see

REPORT 3 – KEY WORKER CONFIDENCE SURVEY

7.4 Families Have Positive Experiences with Multi-Agencies

7.4.1 Social Care

Families valued support from Adult social care (Care services), the Disability Team, an Inclusion support worker, Social workers and Strengthening Families workers. Families also valued support from Early Help to keep them safe and avert social care involvement.

7.4.2 Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing

Families have a very positive experience with **midwives, health visitors, GPs and hospitals**. Diagnosis from specialist health professionals is highly valued as is support from specific services including:

- A mother and baby mental health hospital (outside of Leicestershire)
- Mental health workers and other adult mental health services (including psychiatry and counselling)
- CAMHS and children's mental health services
- Paediatricians
- Dentists
- Speech and language therapists
- Occupational therapy
- Intensive care
- Disability team

Families also receive wider support around their mental health from other services outside of the health service.

7.4.3 Education and SEND

Families valued support from: ASBA; ADHD Solutions; Autism special nurse; CAMHS; Care Navigators; Colleges; Disability Team (special nurse); Educational Psychologists; First Class Solutions/Education; Menphys; Mental health and education practitioner; Mental health children's home; Nurseries; Paediatricians; Psychologist (at Westcotes); SENDIASS; SIBS (Siblings of autism group); Specialist Teaching Service (STS); Speech and language therapists; Toy library; and VISTA.

Areas particularly cited as helpful from families and staff included Educational Psychologist and Paediatric referrals (which led to diagnosis) and other support to families such as reduced timetables.

As well as supporting families around their SEND needs, education and SEND services are supporting families around behaviour and providing wider support to adults including removal of sanctions. Families identify examples of good communication with education services and there is positive feedback around alternative education provision including the tutoring service and special schools.

7.4.4 Finance and Employment

Families valued support from Adult learning courses, Charity Link, Child Support Agency, Citizen's Advice Bureau, Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), Family Fund, Food banks, Job Centre, Jobs, Toy Appeal and Volunteering opportunities.

7.4.5 Criminal Justice System

Families valued support from CAFCASS, Child Support Agency (CSA), Court, Mental institution, Police and Prison.

7.4.6 Housing

Families valued support from District Councils, Housing Associations, HomeStart and The Bridge.

7.4.7 Domestic Abuse Services

Families valued support from Domestic abuse workers (general), NSPCC, Refuges (and mother and baby units/hostels), UAVA and Women's Aid.

7.4.8 Third Sector Services

Families valued support from Adult youth workers (church group), Barnardo's, Counselling (New Dawn Counselling, Family Therapy, Living Without Abuse, Bereavement), Family Fund, Food banks, HomeStart, NSPCC, Rape Crisis Charity, The Bridge, Toy Appeal, Twenty Twenty and Volunteer drivers.

7.4.9 Other

There was limited feedback from families around substance misuse, fire and rescue services and other specific services which may be due to relatively lower levels of need in these areas compared to others.

Recommendation

1. That the Early Help partnership working continues and is developed further with organisations and communities using key insights from this evaluation. This includes improving communication with partners and a specific recommendation from the national Troubled Families evaluation for Leicestershire to develop more support for families from the Third Sector
2. That the insight gathered for this evaluation informs service delivery and the wider system transformation (including where families might be more appropriately supported by other services)

More Information

For more detailed information on positive family experiences with multi-agencies and other agencies supporting families, see

REPORT 4 – MULTI-AGENCY AND OTHER ASSET BASED STRENGTHS

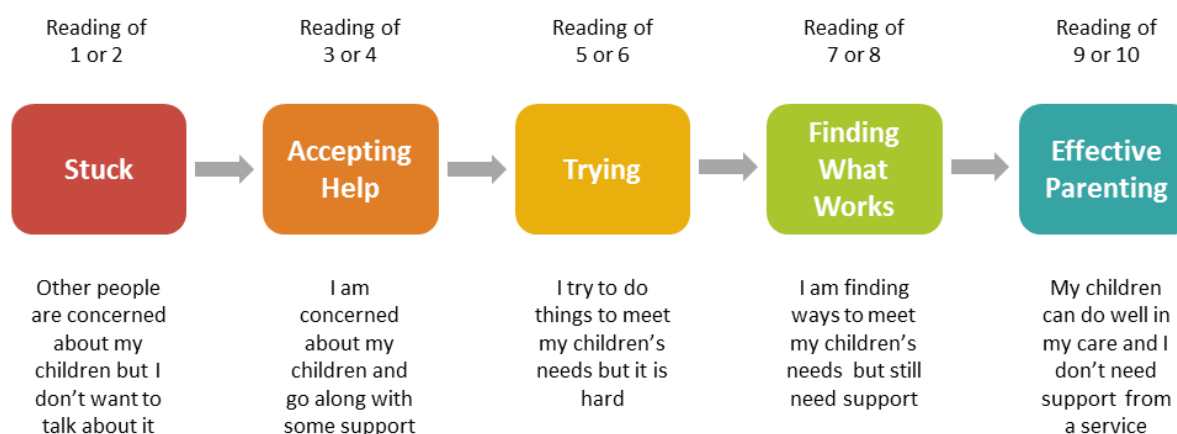
8. Results – Families Progress

Family Star Plus¹²

Family Star Plus is a practitioner-based tool which enables conversation and family plans to be developed whereby workers and families agree a reading of between 1 and 10 against ten key domains at regular intervals to determine where families' progress is. The ten key domains of Family Star Plus are:

1. Positive experiences with **Home and Money**
2. **Keeping Children Safe**
3. Positive **Boundaries and Behaviours**
4. Positive **Family Routines**
5. Good or improved **Physical Health**
6. Positive **Adult Wellbeing**
7. Positive and supportive **Social Networks**
8. **Meeting Children's Emotional Needs**
9. Positive and appropriate **Education and Learning**
10. Achieving **Progress to Work**

A family's reading for each of the ten key domains are recorded by the worker when both assessing and reviewing each case, capturing a Journey of Change for each family. This Journey of Change can comprise of 5 stages, outlined below:

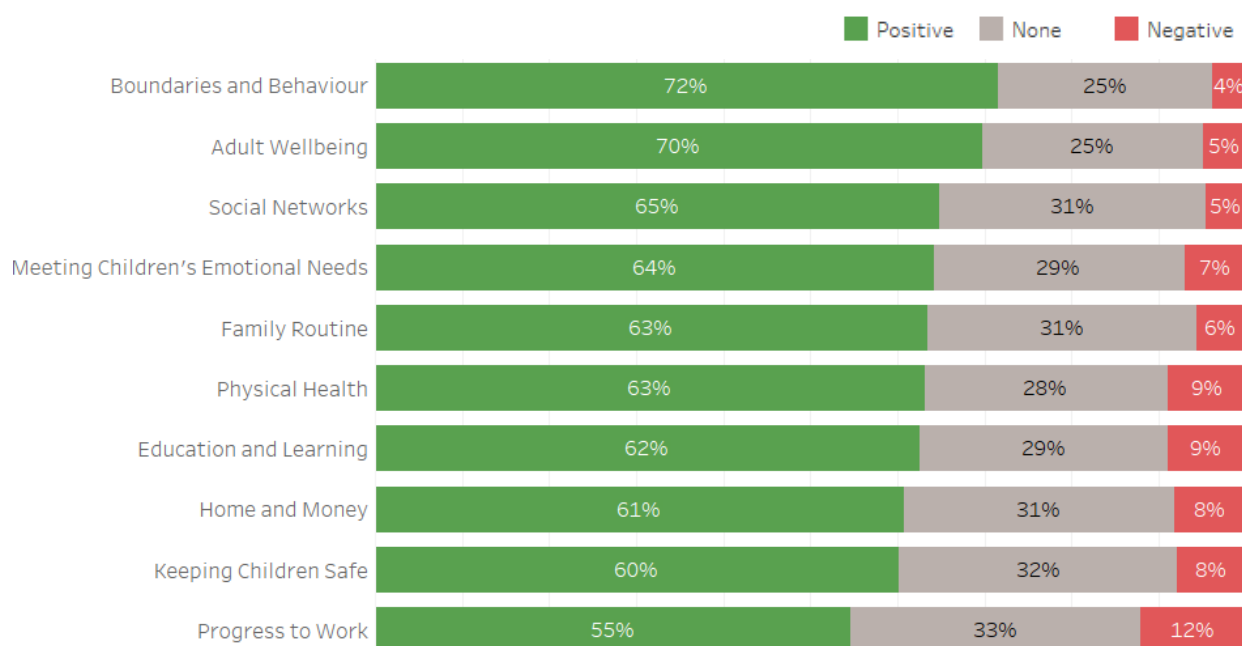


Early Help (casework) impacts positively on the majority of families with 72% of families referred and engaging¹³ with the service making positive progress in one or more of the ten key domains (detailed on the left hand side of the dashboard below). This progress is based on worker readings at the start and end of their intervention.

¹² Burns, S & MacKeith, J. (2013) The Family Star Plus User Guide and The Family Star Plus: Organisation Guide, Brighton: Triangle Consulting

¹³ Accepting help from the Early Help Service around one or more of the Family Star domains

Dashboard 1a: Extract From Family Star¹⁴ Summary Dashboard



The areas where progress is made (i.e. a move from one stage to the next, in order) are:

- Positive **Boundaries and Behaviours** (72%)
- Positive **Adult Wellbeing**¹⁵ (70%)
- Positive and supportive **Social Networks** (65%)
- Meeting **Children's Emotional Needs** (64%)
- Good or improved **Physical Health** (63%)
- Positive **Family Routines** (63%)
- Positive and appropriate **Education and Learning** (62%)
- Positive experiences with **Home and Money** (61%)
- **Keeping Children Safe** (60%)
- Achieving **Progress to Work** (55%)¹⁶

As well as a family not progressing to a higher stage, a family may make no progress because they may enter the service for a particular domain at a high stage already and then sustain that level during the period they are worked with.

Recommendation

That the positive progress that is made across a wide range of families (with mostly complex and multiple issues) is noted

¹⁴ Burns, S & MacKeith, J. (2013) The Family Star Plus User Guide and The Family Star Plus: Organisation Guide, Brighton: Triangle Consulting

¹⁵ Which includes mental health

¹⁶ Family Star Plus Outcomes Tool used by practitioners

More Information

For further information on which groups of families make more or less progress against specific domains, see

REPORT 5 – UNDERSTANDING DEMAND BETTER

REPORT 6 – THEORY OF CHANGE AND THEORY OF ACTION

For more detailed information around progress including families making no or negative progress, see

APPENDIX 1D – SUPPORTING INFORMATION AROUND KEY FINDINGS

9. Which Families Make the Most and the Least Progress

9.1 Grouping Families around Need (Clustering – Need)

Of the 787 families included in the need cluster analysis, 84% (662) were from the Supporting Leicestershire Families service and 16% (125) were from Children’s Centres. The cluster analysis (around need) identified nine clusters of families. These nine clusters group to four high-level areas of need, as shown below:

Table 1b: Clusters and High Levels of Need

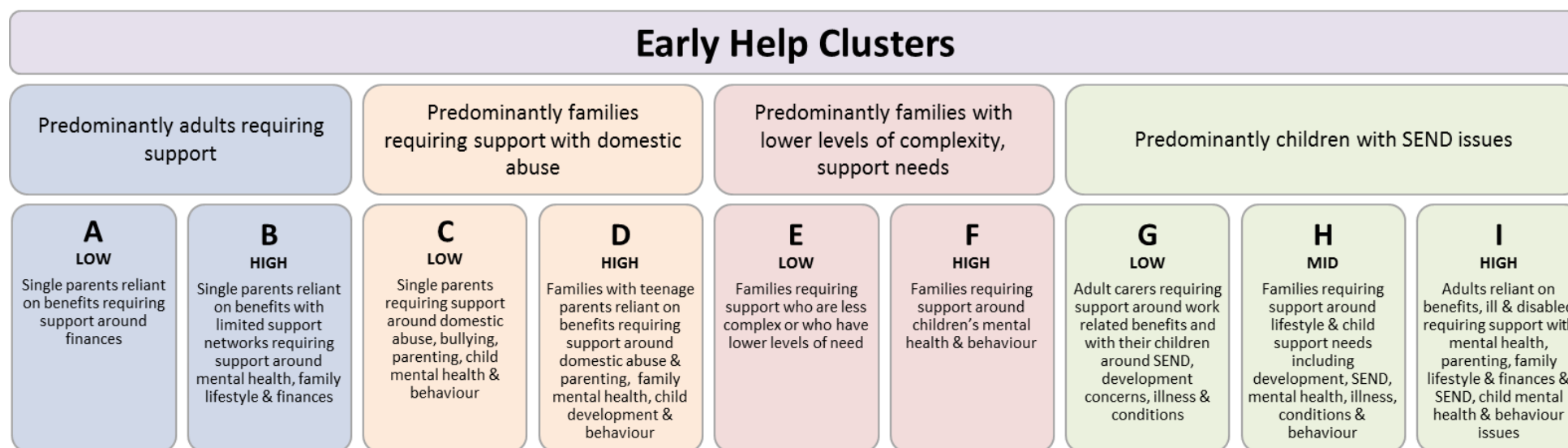


Table 1c - Number of Families in this Evaluation Featuring in Each Cluster

Family group	Adults requiring support		Domestic abuse families		Lower needs families		SEND families		
	A LOW	B HIGH	C LOW	D HIGH	E LOW	F HIGH	G LOW	H MID	I HIGH
Number	134	141	104	42	107	73	68	65	53

[More Information](#)

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For further information on needs and characteristics within each cluster including:

- Which service is more likely to be working with which families
- Which needs are statistically significant in each group
- How needs interrelate
- Social care involvement
- Length of intervention
- Re-referral rates, see

APPENDIX 1D – SUPPORTING INFORMATION AROUND KEY FINDINGS

REPORT 5 – UNDERSTANDING DEMAND BETTER

9.2 Identifying Key Differences around Progress (Clustering – Progress)

In order to illustrate key differences in progress across clusters, families were grouped by their comparative start and end readings using the Family Star¹⁷ outcomes tool across **all** ten Family Star domains. The matrix below illustrates how families were segmented further:

Dashboard 1b: Overall Progress Matrix - Extracted from The Family Star Summary dashboard

	End Readings Lower	End Readings Middle	End Readings Higher	Total
Start Readings Lower	11%	13%	6%	30%
Start Readings Middle	4%	24%	15%	43%
Start Readings Higher	1%	4%	21%	26%
Total	16%	42%	42%	100%

Families were segmented according to their 10 Start Readings (3x rows of the Matrix : Start Readings Lower, Middle, Higher)

Families were also segmented according to their 10 End Readings (3x columns of the Matrix : End Readings Lower, Middle, Higher)

The matrix then identifies enable the identification of:

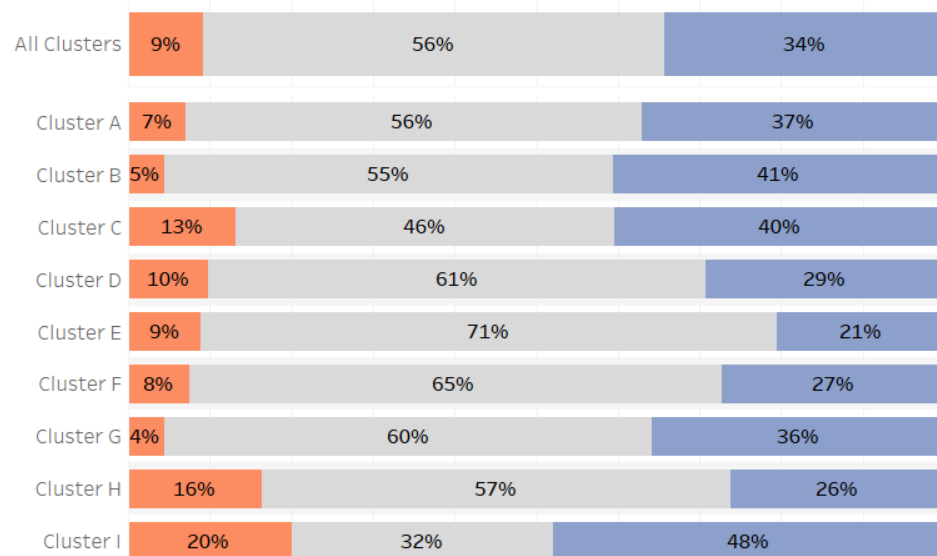
Families that made higher than average progress (34%) including;

- Cluster I (SEND families – High need) 48%
- Cluster B (Adults requiring support – High need) 41%
- Cluster C (Domestic abuse families - Low) 40%
- Cluster A (Adults requiring support - Low) 37%
- Cluster G (SEND families - Low) 36%

Families that made lower than average progress (9%) including;

- Cluster I (SEND families - High) (20%),
- Cluster H (SEND families - Mid) (16%),
- Cluster C (Domestic abuse families - Low) (13%)
- Cluster D (Domestic abuse families - High) (10%)

Further exploration is required to understand why certain families in Cluster I (SEND - High) families are making both the most and least progress.



¹⁷ Burns, S & MacKeith, J. (2013) The Family Star Plus User Guide and The Family Star Plus: Organisation Guide, Brighton: Triangle Consulting
Published July 2018

9.3 Identifying Key Differences around Progress (CHAID)

When the data from the nine groups of ‘need’ and nine groups of ‘progress’ were analysed together using a tool called CHAID, the statistically significant findings below emerged:

Table 1d – Key Findings by Cluster

Cluster	Significant Finding
B (Adults requiring support – High) & D (Domestic abuse families – High)	<p>Half of these families made more progress than the overall.</p> <p>However the other half of these families made the least progress overall and this half were also significantly more likely to have children’s social care involvement after the Early Help intervention.</p>
A (Adults requiring support – Low), C (Domestic abuse families – High), G (SEND families – Low) & H (SEND families – Mid)	<p>Whilst progress for these families was similar to the overall, length of involvement may be an indicator as to whether social care involvement will happen after the Early Help intervention. For families in these groups where the intervention length was more than six months, these families were significantly more likely to have social care involvement.</p> <p>Families with three or more female adults living in the household for these groups of families may warrant further Early Help attention as they made significantly lower progress than the overall. Negative child lifestyle issues at the start of the intervention was a key indicator for significantly lower progress in these groups of families.</p> <p>Good adult mental health and good support networks at the start of the intervention was an important factor for families in these groups making good progress even if other factors such as lower level adult mental health e.g. anxiety and being an adult carer.</p>
I (SEND families – High)	<p>This group of families was unusual, possibly related to the specific SEND conditions and high complex needs. This group had some of the families who made both the least and most progress.</p>
E (Lower needs families – Low) & F (Lower needs families – High)	<p>Whilst these groups of families made lower progress than the overall due to their relatively higher starting point, where financial difficulties featured at the start of the intervention, significant progress was made with these families.</p>

More Information

For more detailed information on progress see
APPENDIX 1D - SUPPORTING INFORMATION AROUND KEY FINDINGS
REPORT 5 – UNDERSTANDING DEMAND BETTER
REPORT 6 – THEORY OF CHANGE AND THEORY OF ACTION

10. Conclusions

10.1 Understanding Need to Break the Cycle

10.1.1 Mental Health

Poor mental health is a high area of need for both adults and children, and has the biggest impact on other positive or negative outcomes for families, such as parenting, domestic abuse, substance misuse, education and employment. Early Help currently undertake limited training for staff around mental health and they commission a limited range of mental health support for families. Many families do not meet the high thresholds for mental health support through the NHS which may reflect an area of unmet need in the Early Help population.

Recommendation

That the Early Help service is developed further to better support parent and child mental health. In particular, where thresholds are too low to meet health service thresholds and where waiting times are lengthy or there are gaps in mental health service provision

10.1.2 Domestic Abuse

There is evidence of the need to provide more support around domestic abuse, with 52% of adults and 36% of young people and children being victims of this type of abuse. There is a strong correlation between families who have suffered domestic abuse, and poor adult mental health, parenting difficulties, and behaviour issues amongst children and young people. The latter including; unstable and disruptive relationships, behaviour issues at school, violence/aggressive behaviours, bullying and child mental health.

Providing families with domestic abuse support contributes to improved mental health. Furthermore, many children and young people - including teenage parents - do not receive targeted support for domestic abuse. Early Help currently do little training for staff or commissioning of children and young people's domestic abuse services (including preventative work).

Recommendation

That the Early Help service is developed further to support families where domestic abuse is present, particularly in relation to supporting children, young people and teenage parents who have been exposed to domestic abuse. Additional preventative work targeting young people and people most at risk of unhealthy relationships should also be considered.

10.1.3 SEND, Development Concerns and Learning Disabilities

There is also a high need to support families with child development concerns (44%), learning disabilities (32%) and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND, 23%). Some SEND families make better progress than others, and it is important to understand the underlying reasons for this and to identify what additional Early Help SEND support might include. This may include support to families not yet in receipt of a formal diagnosis and therefore awaiting subsequent referrals which may meet their SEND needs. It may involve meeting the high and increasing thresholds for support and at key transition stages, for example, between primary and secondary school where needs change.

Recommendation

That the Early Help service is developed further to support families where SEND is present. In particular, understanding;

- Why some SEND families make significantly lower progress than others;
- Where there are staff gaps in skill or knowledge;
- Where thresholds are too low to meet SEND service thresholds;
- Where waiting times are lengthy or there are gaps in SEND provision; and Where short term support around particular SEND issues, including undiagnosed SEND would be helpful to families (including courses)

10.1.4 Single Parent Families and Families with Limited Support Networks

There is a high prevalence of single parent families (60%) compared to the Leicestershire average of 6.2%¹⁸, with 47% of families having limited support networks. Domestic abuse plays a key role in contributing to relationship breakdowns and isolation and we have seen that for some families, having strong support networks and getting families out of their house contributes significantly to progress.

10.1.5 Ethnicity

There is a higher prevalence of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) families being supported by Early Help (13%) compared to the Leicestershire average (9%) with one cluster as high as 17%. However, whilst there are no other statistically significant findings relating to ethnicity compared to these families' overall needs and progress, these families have additional barriers to overcome such as English not being their first language, the impact of racism and discrimination and, for some, cultural issues, limited support networks and more complex issues relating to domestic abuse. As these families feature significantly higher in lower needs groups, should thresholds rise, these are most at risk of not receiving support in the future.

10.1.6 Poverty, Social Housing and Financial Difficulties

Whilst poverty does not always apply to families requiring Early Help support, a reliance on benefits (65%), financial difficulties (including debt) (56%) and social housing features disproportionately to the average Leicestershire family compared to families requiring Early Help support. Many Early Help families get into debt and rent arrears at a young age, are also in low paid jobs or move from previously being employed to worklessness as a result of a wide range of factors including mental health, family disability and illness, domestic abuse and relationship breakdowns and substance misuse.

¹⁸ The estimated number of lone parent families in Leicestershire in 2015 - 41,700 (Source: Annual Population Survey (APS), Office for National Statistics). 2015 population - 675,309.

Whilst employment helps take families out of poverty, for many families improving employment outcomes can only be sustained when other issues such as mental health, substance misuse, domestic abuse, housing and supporting illness and disability (including SEND) have been adequately addressed. Financial difficulties, including debt and rent arrears is often one of the first presenting factors when families are facing multiple needs and those families potentially most at risk of not receiving Early Help support in the future (as thresholds rise) may lose the opportunity Early Help offers in getting support around their financial difficulties and related issues.

Recommendation

That the evidence also found in the DWP Improving Lives report is noted and actions taken forward. *A multi-agency development may include making debt advice and welfare rights more accessible*

10.1.7 Social care

Prior to Early Help intervention, 68% of families had some form of social care involvement. During the intervention this dropped to 25%. Following the intervention, 38% of Early Help cases had some form of social care involvement. Therefore there is an overall reduction of social care involvement of 51% of cases following Early Help intervention. However, there are groups of families who are significantly more likely to have some form of children's social care involvement, or have a child protection plan after the Early Help intervention. Understanding these factors in more detail is critical to ensure Early Help resources are targeted effectively.

Consideration

To analyse reductions of involvement for social care families who do not receive Early Help support compared with those that do

More Information

For more detailed on multi-agencies see

REPORT 4 – MULTI-AGENCY AND OTHER ASSET BASED STRENGTHS

10.2 Multi-Agency Development is Essential

Strong and positive multi-agency partnerships are essential to supporting families and there is scope to develop Early Help partnerships further.

In addition, whilst on the whole, partners have a positive experience with the council's Early Help service there are some issues around their expectations of the service and what the actual Early Help service offer is. **Communication** with partners is the area that needs the biggest improvement. Partners also suggest that Early Help:

- Look at case needs more closely
- Multi-agency working is developed further
- Have quicker response times when families require the support of Early Help services, including expanding the service to take in more families and looking at thresholds.

Recommendation

1. That the positive feedback from partners is noted and the management team look at the multi-agency feedback report in more detail to identify areas for development
2. That the insight gathered for this evaluation, in particular the in-depth journey maps are made available and used for staff and partner training

10.3 There are Areas of Staff Training and Development Required

Whilst the analysis found that Early Help staff have a high level of confidence in affecting change across a number of key areas, there are areas that could be developed further.

Recommendation

1. That the high levels of confidence staff have in affecting change with families is noted and the management team look at the staff feedback report and dashboards in more detail to identify areas for more targeted training and development
2. That the insight gathered for this evaluation, in particular the in-depth journey maps are made available and used for staff and partner training

10.4 Investment in Early Help and Prevention is Needed

The evidence suggests that cutting relatively cheaper preventative and Early Help services across the system or not addressing the gaps identified will create additional reactive cost to the system further down the line. As Leicestershire services continue to face budgetary pressures and make changes without understanding the implications to other services, it is unclear where those costs will fall. However, the evidence suggests these costs will be higher than they might otherwise have been if preventative and early interventions are not invested in across the system.

Recommendation

That the longer term cost implications to the system of cutting preventative and Early Help services is noted

10.5 Targeting Limited Resources in the Future

10.5.1 Social Care Involvement

Above we have identified groups of families who receive Early Help support where they are more likely to have social care involvement in the future. We also know that for some groups, their combination of needs and Family Star¹⁹ start readings gives an indication as to whether they are more likely to have social care involvement during or after the Early Help intervention, whether they will require longer lengths of intervention and which service in Early Help might support families with different needs.

¹⁹ Burns, S & MacKeith, J. (2013) The Family Star Plus User Guide and The Family Star Plus: Organisation Guide, Brighton: Triangle Consulting

That understanding along with other more detailed evidence contained within other reports supporting this evaluation will provide the Early Help service with evidence to target limited resources in the future, potentially identifying areas to have further discussions with social care.

Recommendation

That the insight gathered for this evaluation informs service delivery and the wider system transformation (including where families might be more appropriately supported by other services)

10.5.2 Families with Lower Needs Most at Risk of Receiving Support in the Future

We have also identified groups of families being supported by Early Help who have lower levels of need or who are less complex. As budgets become tighter and thresholds are raised, this Early Help group (and arguably the closest to *true* Early Help) are likely to be those most at risk of not being offered support by Early Help services in the future.

That said, good progress can be made with those families (with relatively simpler needs). Three quarters of these families compared to half of families overall either made positive progress or started and ended relatively higher than other families. In particular- progress is maximised for these families where financial difficulties are present which are relatively cheaper to address and which help prevent needs from changing and escalating further down the line.

Providing these families with support early, illustrates a significantly lower level of re-referral than other families.

Recommendation

1. That the insight gathered for this evaluation informs service delivery and the wider system transformation (including where families might be more appropriately supported by other services)
2. That the Early Help partnership working continues and is developed further with organisations and communities using key insights from this evaluation. This includes improving communication with partners and a specific recommendation from the national Troubled Families evaluation for Leicestershire to develop more support for families from the Third Sector

More Information

For more detailed information supporting the case for multi-agency development see **REPORT 4 – MULTI-AGENCY AND OTHER ASSET BASED STRENGTHS**

10.6 Opportunities

There are opportunities to reach children and young people through continued and increased support and education in schools and colleges around domestic abuse, healthy relationships (including teenage pregnancy), child sexual exploitation, substance misuse, bullying, budgeting and other life skills.

There is an opportunity to create a culture where families seek and accept much earlier support before issues escalate or become much more complex. This can be supported through education and removing the fear of seeking support itself. Areas where this approach could be applied include domestic abuse, sexual abuse, mental health and depression (including post-natal depression) and SEND. The role of universal services such as GPs, health visitors and schools is key as they have regular contact with families, and as such are ideally positioned to identify and act on issues.

There are also opportunities to create more welcoming and supportive communities and housing environments - particularly for newly-arrived families - where isolation may be an issue, (often as a result of domestic abuse and other issues) or where they have a more limited support network.

Recommendation

1. That the insight gathered for this evaluation informs service delivery and the wider system transformation (including where families might be more appropriately supported by other services)
2. That the Early Help partnership working continues and is developed further with organisations and communities using key insights from this evaluation. This includes improving communication with partners and a specific recommendation from the national Troubled Families evaluation for Leicestershire to develop more support for families from the Third Sector

10.7 Whole Family Working and Issues with Data Quality

The Early Help casework service was designed around evidence-based practice to optimise outcomes for families and future generations based on whole family working. There is some evidence to suggest that whole family working is not being applied across all areas of the Early Help service or that there are issues with the recording of whole family data.

Overall, more work is needed to improve the quality of data collected by Early Help workers. There is a strong case to rationalise and review the data being collected in order to ensure it is fit for purpose going forward. For example, improvements could include more systematic recording of neglect, and where Early Help intervention is supporting the aversion of social care and other partner costs.

Recommendations

1. To review the high level findings in an independent report on developing work around costs to better drive decision making. In addition, to consider if there is appetite, capacity and budget to take cost analysis work forward including obtaining hard administrative data locally such as health, housing provider and police data to better evidence outcomes
2. That the issue suggesting the absence of whole family working in some areas of the Early Help service is explored in more detail and addressed. Where this is a result of a data recording issue, it is resolved and measures are put in place to monitor going forward
3. That general data quality issues are noted and work continues to improve Mosaic²⁰ data quality, including regular reporting of data quality for operational managers to action with teams and improved system validation
4. To significantly rationalise and review the assessment and review questions so they are fit for purpose going forward
5. To identify and progress the systematic recording of data on cost aversion, neglect, and lack of family engagement

More Information

For more detailed information around developing work around costs see

APPENDIX 1E – INDEPENDENT REPORT

For more detailed information around data quality issues see

REPORT 5 – UNDERSTANDING DEMAND BETTER

10.8 Gaps and Future Improvements to Evidence

10.8.1 Gaps

Whilst every effort was taken to gather evidence to inform this evaluation, there were some areas where little or no information emerged. Further research could be commissioned on areas such as:

- Gang-related Child Sex Exploitation;
- Repeat child protection plans;
- Cases that have stepped up from Early Help;
- Other causes of significant debt (e.g. loan sharks);
- Families who feel home schooling is their only choice;
- Evidence-based health and wellbeing interventions;
- The experiences of influential adults who aren't living in the family home (including perpetrators of domestic abuse);
- Substance misuse, youth offending and probation service users

10.8.2 Future Improvements to Evidence

There is also an opportunity for deeper analysis using new and existing data, particularly around clusters, progress and outcomes contained within the Family Star Plus²¹ tool and to develop better understanding of costs, and cost benefits in order to inform decision making.

²⁰ The Early Help casework recording system

10.8.3 Reference to Other Evidence-Based Practice

There is already a wide range of evidence-based practice that exists to support and complement the existing model of the Early Help service which also feature as key Troubled Families Programme five intervention factors of:

1. A worker, dedicated to family;
2. Practical 'hands-on' support;
3. A persistent, assertive and challenging approach;
4. Considering the family as a whole – gathering the intelligence; and
5. Common purpose and agreed action.

This evaluation supports these key factors.

The qualitative research has also referenced other service knowledge of what works and other evidence based interventions that support change in families such as:

- Solihull parenting programme
- Signs of safety
- Theraplay
- Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)
- Feeling Safe
- Freedom programme
- Other Domestic Abuse and Substance Misuse programmes
- Other medical interventions

If individuals want to and are able to sustain them.

This Early Help evaluation may provide a foundation on which to test further evidence based practices, particularly around areas that families themselves value.

²¹ Burns, S & MacKeith, J. (2013) The Family Star Plus User Guide and The Family Star Plus: Organisation Guide, Brighton: Triangle Consulting

Recommendations

1. Use the detailed findings of this evaluation to identify areas for further research and analysis to support a process of continual Early Help evaluation and improvement
2. Consider whether areas lacking qualitative evidence (some areas noted above) should be targeted for further research
3. To explore embedding the cluster approach to insight, dashboards and reports going forward in order to better understand changing demand, outcomes for different groups of families, and the targeting of future resources
4. As key metrics to measure progress, develop and embed Family Star reporting and analysis to potentially include further analysis of the number of stages people move from and to. Audit the quality of readings and provide more detail on the reasons behind readings. In particular, where negative progress appears to be being made and address any training needs in relation to Family Star reporting
5. To share Leicestershire's Early Help learnings and evaluation approaches more widely (e.g. with other authorities and the national Troubled Families Team)
6. To consider the value in rollout of evaluating other Early Help services not covered by this evaluation (e.g. non-casework)
7. To review the high level findings in an independent report on developing work around costs to better drive decision making. In addition, to consider if there is appetite, capacity and budget to take cost analysis work forward including obtaining hard administrative data locally such as health, housing provider and police data to better evidence outcomes

More Information

For more detailed information around developing work around costs see
APPENDIX 1E – INDEPENDENT REPORT

11. Summary of Recommendations

The evaluation makes the following recommendations, based on the assembled analysis in the seven detailed reports referred to in this publication:

11.1 Strategic and Partnership Issues

1. That the Early Help Partnership take a collective response to the detailed findings in the evaluation reports and ownership of the recommendations below
2. That the longer term cost implications to the system of cutting preventative and Early Help services is noted;
3. That the positive progress that is made across a wide range of families (with mostly complex, diverse and multiple issues) is noted;
4. That the positive feedback from partners is noted and the management team look at the multi-agency feedback report in more detail to identify areas for development
5. That the Early Help partnership working continues and is developed further with organisations and communities using key insights from this evaluation. This includes strategic and structural development alongside improving communication with partners and a specific recommendation from the national Troubled Families evaluation for Leicestershire to develop more support for families from the Third Sector;
6. That the insight gathered for this evaluation informs service delivery and the wider system transformation (including where families might be more appropriately supported by other services);
7. That the evidence also found in the DWP Improving Lives report is noted and actions taken forward;²²
8. That the Early Help service is developed further to better support parent and child mental health. In particular, where thresholds are too low to meet health service thresholds and where waiting times are lengthy or there are gaps in mental health service provision;
9. That the Early Help service is developed further to support families where SEND is present. In particular, understanding:
 - Why some SEND families make significantly lower progress than others;
 - Where there are staff gaps in skill or knowledge;
 - Where thresholds are too low to meet SEND service thresholds;
 - Where waiting times are lengthy or there are gaps in SEND provision; and
 - Where short term support around particular SEND issues, including undiagnosed SEND would be helpful to families (including courses).
10. That the Early Help service is developed further to support families where domestic abuse is present, particularly in relation to supporting children, young people and teenage parents who have been exposed to domestic abuse. Additional preventative work targeting young people and people most at risk of unhealthy relationships should also be considered;
11. To share Leicestershire’s Early Help learnings and evaluation approaches more widely (e.g. with partners, other authorities and the national Troubled Families Team);

²² Available online: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/improving-lives-helping-workless-families>

11.2 Early Help and Practice Development

12. That the positive feedback from families is noted and the management team look at the family feedback report in more detail to identify areas for more targeted training and development;
13. That the high levels of confidence staff have in affecting change with families is noted and the management team look at the staff feedback report and dashboards in more detail to identify areas for more targeted training and development;
14. That the insight gathered for this evaluation, in particular the in-depth journey maps are made available and used for staff and partner training;

11.3 System, Processes and Data Collection

15. That the issue suggesting the absence of whole family working in some areas of the Early Help service is explored in more detail and addressed. Where this is a result of a data recording issue, it is resolved and measures are put in place to monitor going forward;
16. That general data quality issues are noted and work continues to improve Mosaic²³ data quality, including regular reporting of data quality for operational managers to action with teams and improved system validation;
17. To significantly rationalise and review the assessment and review questions so they are fit for purpose going forward;
18. To identify and progress the systematic recording of data on cost aversion, neglect, and lack of family engagement;
19. Use the detailed findings of this evaluation to identify areas for further research and analysis to support a process of continual Early Help evaluation and improvement;
20. Consider whether areas lacking qualitative evidence (some areas noted above) should be targeted for further research;
21. Develop an updated evidence base/literature review of what works in Early Help and early intervention alongside emerging evidence of the importance of recognising and developing interventions to address Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's)
22. To explore embedding the cluster approach to insight, dashboards and reports going forward in order to better understand changing demand, outcomes for different groups of families, and the targeting of future resources;
23. As key metrics to measure progress, develop and embed Family Star²⁴ reporting and analysis to potentially include further analysis of the number of stages people move from and to. Audit the quality of readings and provide more detail on the reasons behind readings. In particular, where negative progress appears to be being made and address any training needs in relation to Family Star reporting;
24. To consider the value in rollout of evaluating other Early Help services not covered by this evaluation (e.g. non-casework);
25. To review the high level findings in an independent report on developing work around costs to better drive decision making. In addition, to consider if there is appetite, capacity and budget to take cost analysis work forward including obtaining hard administrative data locally such as health, housing provider and police data to better evidence outcomes

²³ The Early Help casework recording system

²⁴ Burns, S & MacKeith, J. (2013) The Family Star Plus User Guide and The Family Star Plus: Organisation Guide, Brighton: Triangle Consulting

More Information

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APPENDIX 1E – INDEPENDENT REPORT

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- Over 50 partners who have contributed to the Most Significant Change and other activities
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- Jenni Inglis from Vie Consulting for the independent report identifying a way forward around cost benefit analysis

²⁵ Burns, S & MacKeith, J. (2013) The Family Star Plus User Guide and The Family Star Plus: Organisation Guide, Brighton: Triangle Consulting

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