

# HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

## Report

<b>Panel:</b>	Corporate Parenting Board
<b>Date:</b>	8 November 2023
<b>Title:</b>	Transformation of Family Help
<b>Report From:</b>	Director of Children's Services

**Contact name:** Alice Bentley, Transforming Social Care, Consultant

**Tel:** 03707 791685

**Email:** Alice.bentley@hants.gov.uk

### Purpose of this Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide members of the Corporate Parenting Board with an overview of the Family Help project. Family Help is a significant, transformative piece of work within the Children & Families branch and is directly aligned to the recommendations from the Independent Review of Children and Social Care and Government response, Stable Homes Built on Love.

### Recommendation

2. That the work undertaken in relation to the Transformation of Family Help are noted by the Corporate Parenting Board.

### Executive Summary

3. This report seeks to provide information in relation to the context and drivers behind this transformative piece of work within the Children & Families branch; Family Help. This report will explain the Family Help delivery model, and will reference, at a high level the changes that are being planned for implementation.
4. Driven by the Independent Review of Children's Social Care, Family Help seeks to enable families to access support and services within their local communities. This premise centres on receiving the right support, from the right professional at the right time; ideally as early as possible, thus reducing the likelihood of an issue or need arising. Family Help will seek to engage with families, reducing the potential for stigmatisation from accessing services.
5. Family Help will seek to reduce transition points for families who require additional support and intervention. Developing and implementing Family Help is a major piece of transformative work, however, it is anticipated that

getting it right will improve outcomes for families, reduce demand for statutory services and provide a blueprint for the future that can be developed and built upon as the concept evolves, and responds to internal and external factors.

6. The intended impact of the changes planned for Family Help are based around putting the child at the centre of their network; wrapping support and services around them to improve their outcomes, whilst ensuring their safety. Services will continue to be based on the existing foundation of the Hampshire Approach and its strength based, relational approach to working with families.

### **Contextual information**

7. The report from the Independent Review of Children's Social Care published in May 2022, led by Josh MacAlister marked a significant and important point for Children's Social Care by setting the direction for the future foundations of a new service delivery model. The report looked to ignite a 'revolution' in Family Help. A key recommendation was the development of a new, Family Help model, whereby teams that include a mix of multi-agency practitioners and roles, deliver services to families at both Levels 3 and 4 (statutory and non-statutory services).
8. At the heart of this model, is recognition of the positive impact that engagement and outcomes for families can have when relationships with professionals are consistent, timely and strengths based. The report focused on the importance of local, accessible services that seek to reduce stigma and encourage families themselves to seek the help and support they need within their local communities. The model will seek to reduce transition points for families when they are engaged, even if their circumstances, needs and risk levels change.
9. In February 2023, the Government published Stable Homes Built on Love, a formal response to the Independent Review of Children's Social Care report. Within this report, Family Help was specifically mentioned noting that families would "receive the right help at the right time". Acknowledgement was given that families can have too many workers involved, or struggle to get help; reference was made to making a change enabling families to access help. Of importance, Stable Homes Built on love referenced that more adults should be employed, that do not have to be qualified social workers, to support families within this new Family Help concept.
10. In January 2023, phase 1.1 of Family help; the development and recruitment/ implementation of Family Practitioners went live with great success. Phase 1.2 is the next stage and seeks to consolidate the aforementioned recommendations and bring them to life. Phase 1.2 of this model will combine the delivery of services across the Family Support Service (FSS) and Children Assessment Safeguarding Teams (CAST). The aim of Family Help in Hampshire to meet the following objectives:

- Improving outcomes for families by enabling and facilitating access to services and support at a very local, community-based level
- Reducing the risk of escalation of needs, risks and, where there is escalation to reduce transition points for families to maximise engagement
- Reducing demand upon statutory services as needs will be met at an earlier point of intervention
- Developing teams of multi-agency roles and professionals to ensure the right worker with the right skills provides the right support, at the right time
- Increasing recruitment and retention of social workers through reduced caseloads and more creative ways of working across a mixed caseload.

## **Relevant Background and Information**

11. Implementing a new Family Help model across Hampshire is a significant project to undertake. Therefore, given the scale and longer-term vision of Family Help, the approach taken to implementation will be both phased and iterative. Support of the project delivery has involved Transformation Consultants, alongside a project group which includes District Managers, Team Managers, Workforce Development staff and HR.
12. Family Help 1.2 builds upon phase 1.1 which was the introduction of the Family Practitioner post. These posts were developed per the recognition that differently qualified staff can provide integral support to families. Staff started filling these posts in January 2023, and the number of Family Practitioners employed by Hampshire Children's Services has steadily increased over recent months. As this is a new case holding role, there is a requirement for consistent, robust management oversight. This will ensure monitoring of changes to risk and appropriate action and response where required.
13. It should be noted that OFSTED have been clear around their expectations of social worker oversight when families are allocated to a differently qualified worker. In response, Hampshire have enhanced existing reporting procedures, alongside introducing new expectations and management oversight processes.
14. Phase 1.2 of Family Help further builds upon phase 1.1, transitioning Family Support Workers, currently working within the Family Support Service, into these new Family Practitioner posts, based within the Family Help team. It is recognised these staff have a wealth of experience and will be integral to the approach of supporting families with the right person, at the right time.
15. Within Hampshire there are 32 Children's Assessment and Safeguarding Teams (CAST) and 8 Family Support Service (FSS) teams. Phase 1.2 of the Family Help project looks at merging these services to deliver Level 2, 3 and 4 work under the Family Help umbrella.
16. The Independent Review of Children's Social Care referenced drives for teams to reduce their catchment down to child populations of 30-50,000. Part of the project to date has been centred around forming local, teams which will

serve smaller areas in districts. In total, there will be 34 Family Help teams, and dependent on size, caseload averages and staffing numbers there will be between 3-5 teams within a district. The concept is that these small, geographically mapped Family Help teams will be based in the local communities, and following the recommendations from the Independent Review of Children's Services and Stable Homes Build on Love, they will be best placed to support, serve, and safeguard children.

17. In addition to the above merger of CAST and FSS teams and the development of geographically aligned teams, phase 1.2 of Family Help has built upon the concept of a Child Protection Lead Practitioner (as referenced in both reports) and created a new post, which will be launching for both internal and external candidates soon. As per the Independent Review of Children's Social Care and the Government response, these positions will be filled by experienced practitioners who have five years post-qualifying experience. They will have the necessary skills to chair meetings and hold complex child protection cases, whilst supporting staff and joint working with families where appropriate.
18. A central concept of a new Family Help model is that teams will be multi-agency in nature. Whilst social care teams work in partnership with a range of partners, both statutory and third sector, there is work to do in order to bring them into any future Family Help structure. As part of an earlier phase of Hampshire's transformation, Specialist Intensive Worker Hubs were developed to deliver services and interventions in order to keep more children safely at home through both prevention and reunification. Within these teams there are Specialist CAMHS and Parental Substance Misuse Workers co-located and jointly working with families. The development of local Family Help teams which involve the presence of local agencies will be part of Hampshire's long-term plan. However, this will be placed within a later phase, when the foundations and structures of Family Help teams have been established and are strong enough to be built upon.
19. In terms of next steps and timescales the Independent Review of Children's Social Care report does lay out an expected timeline over a period of years allowing time for scoping and planning through to full implementation and business as usual. Ultimately there will need to be amendments to core legislation to implement several changes put forward within the report. However, in the interim local authorities are expected to start working on developing their Family Help model and other elements as best as possible within current legislation.
20. As evidenced by this report, Hampshire is clearly further along the path with the developments already introduced and implemented. It is hoped that implementation of phase 1.2 will take place in 2024 with the merger of CAST & FSS into Family Help teams, the geographical alignment of those teams, alongside the introduction of the Child Protection Lead Practitioner and Family Practitioner roles.

## **Finance**

18. A prior business case has been signed off which enabled each district to fund five CAST; an increase of one team per district.
19. Given the above budget decisions, Family Help phase 1.2 has based costings within this financial envelope. Close work with finance around our business case and affordability has taken place and remains ongoing. It is not anticipated that the implementation of Family Help will incur any additional financial cost at this time.

## **Performance**

20. Given phase 1.2 has not yet launched, it is difficult to quantify performance and impact. However, KPIs and embedding change measures are currently being developed which in due course will measure: the impact on social worker recruitment and retention, caseload numbers, staff satisfaction and sickness levels and the family journey through social care to evidence a reduction in the number of transitions for them, thus strengthening working relationships.

## **Consultation and Equalities**

21. N/A

## **Climate Change Impact Assessment**

22. N/A

## **Conclusions**

23. Whilst the Independent Review of Children's Social Care and the Government response, Stable Homes Built on Love sets a clear direction for change it is for Hampshire Children's Services to develop and implement new ways of working that complement the local environment and services. It is not yet precisely known the level of central prescription that will come from the DfE (Department for Education), however, with all this change and transformation comes a future of possibilities. The potential for going even further, bringing more, or all, social care teams and services into the Family Help model and structure.
24. Changes on this considerable scale have and will continue to bring challenges; both practically and practice based. Hence staff engagement with the process and helping to shape the future is imperative. For families, the outcomes will be positive, when Family Help is established, they will be able to access locally based services, ideally all in one place, much earlier in their time of need.

25. It is anticipated within Hampshire that the first phase of Family Help 1.2, which involves the merger of both Children Assessment and Safeguarding Teams (CAST) and the Family Support Service (FSS) will take place in early 2024.

**REQUIRED CORPORATE AND LEGAL INFORMATION:**

**Links to the Strategic Plan**

**This proposal does not link to the Strategic Plan but, nevertheless, requires a decision because:**

This report is provided to the Corporate Parenting Board only in response to its request for information about Family Help.

**Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents**

**The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)**

Document

Location

None

## **EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT:**

### **Equality Duty**

The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Act with regard to the protected characteristics as set out in section 4 of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation);
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (see above) and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

### **Equalities Impact Assessment:**