

# Children and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Panel

<b>DATE</b>	21/09/2023
<b>REPORT OF</b>	Janice Spencer, Director of Children's Services
<b>SUBJECT</b>	Team around the family (TAF)
<b>STATUS</b>	Open

## CONTRIBUTION TO OUR AIMS

The Team around the Family (TAF) approach has been introduced as a key priority to enhance early conversations, support and utilising universal provision to ensure children have the right support at the earliest opportunity as set out in the council plan. This includes supporting our partners to be able to support children and families in the best possible way that builds on the importance of relationships, knowledge, and skills identified within the council plan.

As the team around the family becomes embedded our aim is that this will reduce the Children in Need (CIN), Child Protection (CP), Children in care numbers, whilst ensuring that needs are identified at the earliest point, which in turn will prevent statutory involvement in families lives.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The development of Team around the Family has been identified as a key priority of Children Services and the Safeguarding Board. This is due to the number of children who are currently open to social care, the number of contacts to our 'Integrated Front Door' and recognising that in North East Lincs there is significant support being offered to families at a lower level, which historically we weren't monitoring or supporting.

It was agreed that to meet our aim we could develop a Team around the Family and Early Help strategy to look at how all professionals in North East Lincs can contribute to improving children's outcomes. This has included developing with our partners (both statutory and voluntary) the strategy, the commitment to doing things differently and creating an assessment and plan.

## MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION

This paper has been brought to scrutiny panel to be able to share the newly signed off Early help strategy and assessment which has been well received by partners and collaboratively created with key partners across NEL and signed off by the executive board.

## BACKGROUND AND ISSUES

The team around the family (TAF) team was established in January 2023 with all primary, secondary, and further education settings being allocated a TAF link worker who can support professionals to identify need, support services available

and complete early help assessments and plans (EHA) prior to creating a TAF meeting.

It was recognised the need for co-production of a North East Lincolnshire Early Help Strategy to represent our joint commitment as partners to work collaboratively to provide the earliest help for children and young people. Although a previous strategy had been developed this was not done in collaboration with partners. Through conversations with our partners there was also the need to revise the current early help assessment to make this simpler and less complicated for partners when working with families. Task and finish groups were established with representation from education, health, police, and the voluntary sector to look at the development of a revised Early help Assessment (EHA) for partners and the development of the revised EH strategy. It reflects our collective commitment as partners to working together and ensuring that children, young people, and their families receive the appropriate support at the right time.

Both the strategy and the revised EHA have now been signed off by the board with launch sessions planned over the course of September alongside a plethora of workshops to support professionals. A TAF guidance handbook has been developed to support partners as well as Team around the family leaflet for parents and carers to help understand the process. Systems and informatics have been looked at and we are now able to report on the number of early help assessments held by education, health, and the voluntary sector. We are working closely with the integrated front door and tracking all the referrals which have not met threshold for support from the Local Authority and offering support to the education settings regarding TAF.

To date we have had 118 Integrated front door referrals whereby threshold has not been made and we have supported 98 of these as a TAF team. Despite not officially launching the revised Early help assessment as of the 1<sup>st</sup> September 86 children have been supported by TAF. There have been 70 individual EHA's submitted by 46 educational settings.

Currently the Team around the family has 3.5 equivalent TAF link workers and 2 advanced practitioners to support the training and development of partners. All workers are out of the current establishment within the existing Early Help Team

## **RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

The TAF strategy is an exciting opportunity for our partnerships to continue evolving to meet the needs of the children, young people, and families of Northeast Lincolnshire. However, ensuring its success will require sustained effort and commitment from all. The robustness of our early help offer lies in the strength of our partnerships and multi-agency approach where all stakeholders work collectively to address the diverse needs of children and families. There are opportunities by adopting a collaborative mindset and committing to shared objectives, resources, and expertise of different professionals in achieving a comprehensive and integrated approach to Early help.

This model enhances the quality and effectiveness of services, ensuring that children and families receive timely and appropriate support tailored to their specific circumstances reducing in the need for children entering statutory service.

## **REPUTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS**

There are potential positive reputational implications for the council resulting from the decision. An action plan has been agreed with the council's communication service covering the changes to requesting a service from the local authority using the newly revised early help assessment and how to make a safeguarding referral as well as the introduction to the revised Early help strategy. All partners have been invited to attend one of three launch sessions to communicate the changes and we have received extremely positive feedback from schools who have already accessed support and piloted the new document.

## **FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The Team around the family has been developed within the already establishment with no added cost to the local authority. With the introduction of the team around the family this over time will look to reduce Children in Need (CIN), Child Protection (CP), Cared for Children numbers which has significant cost currently to the Local Authority.

With families accessing support earlier and partners taking on the role of lead professional to support families this will lessen the financial burden with a reduction in children needing statutory support or being cared for by the local authority.

## **CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IMPLICATIONS**

All children need a strong support network of people that care about them, at times they may need additional support from professionals and through team around the family this will ensure right person at the right time. This will promote better relationships for children and young people with the lead professional being someone who knows the children and family best. Children's and young people's voices will be heard throughout the process and inform plans to ensure children feel safe and are safe.

## **CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no impacts on climate change and the environment as a direct result of this report.

## **MONITORING COMMENTS**

In the opinion of the author, this report does not contain recommended changes to policy or resources (people, finance or physical assets). As a result no monitoring comments have been sought from the Council's Monitoring Officer (Chief Legal Officer), Section 151 Officer (Director of Finance) or Strategic Workforce Lead.

## **WARD IMPLICATIONS**

There are no ward implications as a direct result of this report.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

[reports for links\Early Intervention Strategy 2023-25.pdf](#)

[reports for links\Early Help Assessment Plan.docx](#)

## **CONTACT OFFICER(S)**

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