

Appendix A

Slough Early Help Report

'Getting It Right for Children in Slough'

Viv Murray and Sue Cook

Slough definition of Early Help

Identifying the needs of children and families at an early stage to prevent problems escalating into crises, and empowering families to seek and accept tailored, co-ordinated support that improves the lives of individual children, young people and whole families

***Providing the right service at the right time in the right way for
Slough families***

Foreword

We are very pleased to present this multi-agency report on Early Help, which has been developed through extensive consultation with staff across partner agencies and incorporates the voice of the child, young person and parents. Our strap line “*Getting It Right for Children in Slough*”, is our strategic objective and sits behind everything we do, including our decision to radically review early help pathways, processes and services. To help us have a shared understanding of what Early Help means, staff from a range of agencies developed our definition of Early Help: *providing the right service at the right time in the right way for Slough families*.

Early Help is one of our Children and Young People’s Partnership key priorities and we recognise that if we are to make significant improvements to the lives of children, young people and their families in Slough, we need to improve our early intervention and prevention services. Furthermore, we recognise that this must be a **multi-agency** approach where we work together, share information and talk to each other.

Section 10 of the Children Act 2004 requires each local authority to make arrangements to promote cooperation between the authority, each of the authority’s relevant partners and such other persons or bodies working with children in the local authority’s area, which includes protection from harm and neglect.

The overall strategic aims for children and young people in Slough are derived from current understanding of needs and the progressive increase in the numbers of children in the Social Care system. The Slough Early Help Commissioning Plan (2012 – 2015) highlights the rising numbers of children and young people, a large and growing transient population, growing numbers of asylum seekers, low-income households, and homeless families. Contacts and referrals for children in need, child protection plans and looked after children are mainly due to neglect and emotional abuse linked to parental issues of domestic abuse, substance and alcohol abuse and mental health. If we are to prevent escalation into more targeted, specialist, invasive and costly services we need to be able to address these issues early.

This report highlights how we conducted the review, the findings but more importantly the recommendations. The recommendations address the need to link Early Help services across partner agencies to ensure a consistent approach to service provision and a clear pathway and continuum of service provision to meet needs. They also address the need to re-structure some Council services and review and redesign the CAF process so that there is multi-agency ownership and ‘buy-in’. The report has been agreed by the Children and Young people’s Partnership Board (CYPPB) and the Safeguarding Improvement Board as a multi-agency responsibility. We have started the work and we are making good progress. We aim to have a Borough wide, launch of Early Help in October and have all elements of the Early Help changes fully operational by December 2013. Whilst we recognise that this is ambitious, we also know that we need to start to make an impact NOW if we are to improve the lives of children, young people and their families in Slough. ‘Getting it Right for Children in Slough’ is what we will achieve.

Councillor Pavitar Mann, Chair of Children and Young People’s Partnership Board and Lead Member

Jane Woods, Strategic Director of Wellbeing and Director of Children’s Services

Kitty Ferris, Assistant Director, Children, Young People and Families

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10. Introduction

1.1 Slough Context

Early Help is one of the five themes in the Slough Safeguarding Improvement Plan and is seen by the Improvement Board, the Council and its partners as a key area of strategic and operational development to ensure that children are safe. The Slough Children and Young People's Strategic Plan (2011-2014) also identifies early help as one of five key priorities.

Early Help services are reviewed by Ofsted and the LGA (through Peer Reviews) in terms of what impact they have on preventing children suffering abuse and neglect and whether they prevent escalation into more specialist, invasive and costly services, particularly Children's Social Care.

Whilst the Slough Ofsted report (2011) stated that early intervention and prevention services are effective in Slough, the Council and its partners are keen to explore whether early help can do more to reduce the need for intervention from Children's Social Care. The aim is to support improvement in Children's Social Care by ensuring that effective early help services are in place.

Slough produced an Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy in 2010 which was revised in May 2012. It gives an overview of the principles and practices guiding early help with vulnerable children and young people, and states its aim as being to deliver integrated, local services which are easily accessible to children, young people and their families in Slough and help to keep them safe.

The Slough Early Help Commissioning Plan (2012 – 2015) highlights the rising numbers of children and young people, a large and growing transient population, growing numbers of asylum seekers, unaccompanied minors, low-income households and homeless families. The overall strategic aims for children and young people in Slough are derived from current understanding of needs and the progressive increase in the numbers of children in the Social Care system. Contacts and referrals for children in need, child protection plans and looked after children are mainly due to neglect and emotional abuse linked to parental issues of domestic abuse, substance and alcohol abuse and mental health.

Slough commissioned a number of significant reviews as part of the commissioning plan: Schools Services Review (including Children's Centres), Youth Services (IYSS and TYS), Family Support and Parenting Programmes. All these reviews and the work on Troubled Families have been fed into the work outlined in this report.

1.2 National Context

There is sufficient evidence through the following reports commissioned nationally: Graham Allen, Eileen Munro, Frank Field and Claire Tickell to support Slough's commitment to, and investment in, early help. Graham Allen in his reports states that "early intervention is an approach which offers a real opportunity to make lasting improvements in the lives of our children, to forestall many persistent social problems and end their transmission from one generation to the next, and to make long term savings to public spending." It is important that local authorities use their early intervention services to 'narrow the gap', particularly for those children who are not meeting their potential and are likely to have poor outcomes.

Eileen Munro describes the importance of early help as the "importance of providing help at the earliest possible opportunity in order to improve outcomes for children, young people and families. Preventative services will do more to reduce abuse and neglect than reactive services."

Working Together 2013 (statutory guidance) supports the importance of early help and outlines some key messages:

- Effective early help relies on agencies working together
- Emphasis on intervening early – preventing escalation
- Supporting early identification; assessment of need; targeted intervention
- Reminder of Section 10 responsibility to promote co-operation
- Aim should be to provide coordinated services, not piecemeal services
- Support for evidenced based programmes.

Themes from national research show that there are common barriers to effective prevention. These include:

- lack of clarity in terms of roles and responsibilities
- unclear about how to manage information sharing
- how to make decisions about what early help to offer
- how to identify those children and young people who may be or are likely to suffer harm or where early help/intervention will prevent escalation
- silo working – strategic and operational levels
- confusion regarding the CAF
- no strategic policy and direction
- poor understanding of need
- inability to invest in early intervention

At national level, consultation with children and young people asked for their perspective on integrated working. They said:

- Support my growing up and help me be prepared
- Know me, listen and hear
- Understand my needs and respond in time
- Plan with me
- Make sure it happens
- Keep talking to me

2. Scope and methodology of the Early Help Review

2.1 The remit of the review was to:

- Review current approaches to early intervention and prevention in Slough, including pathways and the service landscape from universal to specialist services
- Engage with stakeholders at a strategic, operational management and practitioner level to increase understanding of current roles, processes and practices as they impact on the child's journey through the system
- Consider recent reviews undertaken on key services and their implications for delivery of integrated early help
- Support implementation of single point of entry for targeted and specialist help
- Identify workforce development implications and priorities
- Report progress and recommendations to the Executive Partnership group

In order to achieve maximum impact in Slough, we agreed that we needed to:

- Put forward proposals for change (not just a review)
- Make sense of the 'landscape' in Slough
- Achieve more impact, keep children safer
- Change the service offer
- Ensure what we do is part of a whole system approach to change
- Ensure there is continuum of support across all agencies
- Ensure there is integrated and collaborative working
- Develop services that are needs led – outcome focussed
- Ensure there are clear thresholds and pathways – no wrong door
- Develop more of a focus on evidence based practice
- Deliver value for money
- Deliver services which are flexible and responsive
- Ensure that there is appropriate workforce development and a workforce which is fit for purpose

The methodology for this review included:

- Meeting with senior managers and commissioners to agree a Work Plan for the review
- Reading and analysis of recent reviews and reports to assess implications for a whole system approach to Early Help
- Gathering information about current processes e.g. thresholds, , pathways, referral and assessment, front door(s), CAF, lead professional, Team Around The Child (TAC) and Family (TAF), Troubled Families, step up/step down procedures, to identify strengths, gaps and opportunities for future development of an integrated approach. This included observation of the existing Children's Social Care duty system and the Early Response Hub.
- Mapping the child and family's journey – as it is now and how it could be improved
- Gathering information about current performance e.g. Children's Social Care contacts and referrals, and other key indicators
- Understanding level of current integration between:
 - children's services
 - adult and children's services
 - welfare/criminal justice service
 - statutory and VCS services
- Gathering information about the range of services available in Slough to understand early help resources, duplication and gaps
- Examining information about the current workforce to identify strengths, gaps and future skills requirements
- Examine funding and commissioning arrangements for Early Help services to understand resources available currently and in the future
- Holding meetings and/or focus groups with key managers and staff to identify and understand current issues, concerns and priorities of agencies
- Reading recent consultation findings to identify and understand current issues, concerns and priorities of service users
- Running workshops on draft models with partner agencies and current service providers to establish views, feedback, engagement and to agree clear definition of Early Help in Slough
- Proposing models for improved delivery of an integrated early help service based on agreed objectives and principles
- Advising on re-shaping and implementation of services to support achievement of clear protocols, policies and procedures that reflect the new service, job descriptions consistent and fit for purpose, and relevant training, skills and support

- Preparing a report with analysis and recommendations to present commissioners and the Executive Partnership Group with findings of the review and options for the future shaping, commissioning and delivery of early intervention services

3. Findings and Analysis

Staff and managers from a broad range of agencies have been instrumental in helping us put together the findings of this review. We have listened to staff and partners and incorporated their views into our proposals for the re-shaping of some services. We have continually checked our findings and proposals with individual staff and had some extremely useful workshops and focus groups.

3.1 Overview of Early Help Service Delivery

There are clearly high levels of commitment and enthusiasm from a wide range of agencies about the delivery of early help services that can respond effectively to issues and problems faced by families in Slough. This spans all statutory partners and voluntary and community organisations. Many services are responsive and innovative in their response to needs of families, and there is evidence of some good partnership working. However, this has to be balanced against the lack of a shared vision and strategic approach to Early Help across agencies, which has led to some fragmentation of service development and 'silo' working. Pathways to services are not always clear, nor are eligibility criteria for services, resulting in some inconsistency, duplication and gaps in provision for families. Furthermore, whilst the need to adopt a whole family approach is accepted in principle, there is a limited evidence of regular and effective joint working and co-ordination of adult and children's services to achieve this. There has been no identified strategic lead for Early Help within the current partnership arrangements. However, this is an increasingly important area of focus both in terms of improving outcomes for children and young people by intervening early, and in reducing the cost to the public purse by providing effective support that reduces the need for later statutory intervention. Slough's existing Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy was due for review in May 2013, and it would be timely to refresh this strategy and ensure there are clear links between early help strategy, commissioning, service design and delivery.

3.2 Thresholds and levels of need

Agencies appear to have a reasonably good shared understanding of thresholds of need in terms of where families might 'sit' within Slough's current definitions of levels of need, but this does not always lead to common agreement as to which agencies should then respond to that need or take a lead role in assessment, planning and co-ordination of services. This is particularly evident where families have multiple or complex needs. A significant number of contacts are made to Children's Social Care, which do not reach their threshold for referral. Referring agencies have had genuine concerns about specific incidents or increasing levels of need that they consider to be 'level 3 needs' – High or Complex – requiring integrated targeted support. Not all of these families will require a Child In Need assessment by Children's Social Care, but some will still need integrated targeted support, sometimes of an intensive nature. It is the Level 3 need that is creating the most anxiety and frustrations in agencies who believe that they cannot provide the whole family, intense support and wish to refer to a service that can. It is likely that this problem is more associated with lack of clear **pathways** to the right service than a lack of understanding of thresholds of need.

Families at lower thresholds of need are often supported by agencies that they are already in contact with, especially universal services such as schools and health visitors, and by local voluntary, community and faith organisations. At lower levels of need, the issues are not so much about understanding thresholds as about recognition and identification of escalating needs and the

importance of services being able to 'Think Family' when they are working primarily with either adults or children within families.

3.3 Early Response Hub (ERH) and current Family Support Service

An Early Response Hub provides signposting, advice and guidance. It has operated a duty system staffed by a rota drawn from the current Family Support Service, the Integrated Youth Support Service, Stonham (for specialist domestic violence support) and the Family Information Service. The current ERH is very closely associated with the existing Family Support Service, as it draws on the same group of staff for its rota and has the same managers. The Hub has a good knowledge of a wide range of local services, and appears to be well regarded by those agencies and organisations. It is however often the case that the Hub holds on to enquiries and referrals for a period that is longer than ideal, as it takes time to follow up missing information, undertake some preliminary assessment of family circumstances and broker and negotiate with agencies for services to be provided.

The current Family Support Service has not been developed under one vision, but instead has been formed incrementally over a period of time. The service contains a mixture of staff from different backgrounds that were previously in other services. This includes some staff originally from Children's Centres, and staff that transferred to the service when the Family Intervention Project (FIP) was disbanded after funding ceased in 2011. Staff from the FIP have been used to providing intensive, often very practical support with a very small caseload of families, using the FIP model of rewards and sanctions and 'gripping the family'. Other staff in the Family Support Service e.g. those from Children's Centre backgrounds, have tended to offer shorter term, less intensive forms of family support. More recently, the service has been expected to be a main provider of interventions for Families First (Troubled Families).

3.4 Current pathways to targeted and specialist services within Slough MBC

There is currently only one 'front door' into Children's Social Care services in Slough. All agencies and members of the public must make contact via this front door, which operates a duty system to establish the nature of the concern and decide whether it reaches the threshold for further formal assessment by Children's Social Care. A significant proportion that do not reach the Children's Social Care threshold are passed across to the Early Response Hub, which operates its own, separate duty system as described earlier. Whilst the existing Children's Social Care (CSC) duty staff and the ERH duty team are located next to each other, there is often no discussion on cases transferred to ERH. Both ERH and CSC have separate processes, systems and management.

In reality, the main pathway through to ERH and the Family Support Service is via the duty system for Children's Social Care, even though the Family Support Service can take direct referrals, and do so in a number of cases. An audit of ERH referrals showed that they were appropriately referred to ERH from CSC, although this was a relatively small sample (14 cases). There was evidence of some good work but some which could have been moved through to a service within a shorter timescale.

3.5 Consent and Information Sharing

There is clear evidence of confusion about consent and information sharing. On some occasions, information about families appears to be shared between agencies without explicit consent being obtained. Clearly this can be justified if there are concerns about significant harm to children or adults, or if there is a need to share information to prevent crime, as legislation and guidance provides for these circumstances – but this is not always the case. Establishing whether the family has given consent to share information needs to be more rigorous. Further work is needed to clarify when consent is sought and how this impacts on thresholds and the processes at the front door.

3.6 Common Assessment Framework

Slough has a small dedicated CAF team who manage the eCAF system and the multi-agency CAF training. The resource put into the CAF team has reduced and this has had an impact on: ability to deliver training; quality assurance and analysis of CAFs; support to CAF champions and management and analysis of the information on the eCAF system. Slough has made a decision to use the eCAF system for all CAFs. However, this is not used by all agencies that, for different reasons, do not like or cannot access the system. The eCAF system is used as a referral form. An audit of the system showed that basic information was not always complete, that the CAF form was not completed, there were no action plans and little evidence of sustained use of the system. A major concern is that of evidencing consent to share information. The systems flags where consent is not given but there is no evidence that any action is taken and information is still shown on a shared system. Due to resources it has been difficult for the team to audit the system and quality of CAFs. Many CAFs were still open with no evidence of any work being undertaken. There are no TACs on the system and no record of when the next TAC is due. The engagement with middle managers is poor and they should take more of a role in quality assuring CAFs. On a brief review of the system the quality of CAFs was poor.

3.7 Troubled Families

The implementation of the Troubled Families agenda since 2012 has introduced more complexity into the process of finding the right level and type of support for families. In Slough, the Troubled Families response has been branded as 'Families First'. Responsibility for identification of families, co-ordination of service delivery and collation of outcomes including Payment By Results data has not been clear, although this is about to change with the appointment of a specific Co-ordinator. Currently, families within the Families First cohort may be receiving a service from a number of different agencies, including the two Pupil Referral Units, the Youth Offending Team, the Housing Tenancy Sustainability Team and the Family Support Service. Whilst this mixed model is very feasible in terms of service delivery, it does require overarching co-ordination and clear agreements with service providers in terms of approaches and desired outcomes.

3.8 Impact of previous service reviews

A number of service reviews had already taken place at the time that this overview of early help was conducted, which has meant that decisions about delivery of some relevant services have already been made. The review of Children's Centres led to a decision to commission out the service in the future and this process is reaching its final stages. Within the current provision of Children's Centres, there is a relatively small team of staff who offer more targeted family support for referred families with additional needs, including those referred from the Two Year Old Panel. The review of Integrated Youth Support Services has led to a restructuring of the service, and part of the new structure includes a Targeted Youth Support Service. The previous decisions made by these two reviews preclude any decision at this stage to consider if all or part of the Targeted Youth Support Service and the Family Support element of Children's Centres could be incorporated into a developing Targeted Family Support Service. However, it is possible to develop an integrated model using the current structures.

4. Recommendations

4.1 Introduction – How it fits Together

The review looked at Early Help services across a range of agencies, including the Council, schools, private, voluntary and community sector, with the aim of providing clear pathways, consistency and quality of early help services. Therefore, the recommendations deal with the strategic issue of developing shared: vision, priorities, referral pathways, eligibility criteria, quality assurance, protocols and outcomes across a broad range of service areas. They also deal with Council operational issues: re-structure of CAF, One Front Door and Family Support Services. To deal with the complexity and support clarity and understanding of how we implement the recommendations, we have developed different work streams:

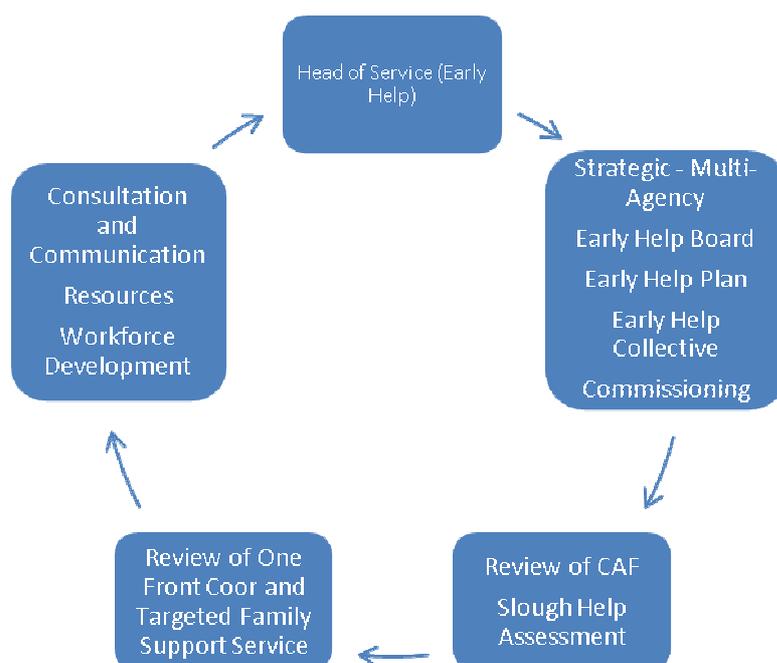
Strategic/Multi-Agency

1. **Creation of Head of Service (Early Help) post – Managed within the Council but with a strategic partnership responsibility**
2. **Early Help Board sitting under the Children and Young People Partnership Board**
3. **Development of a multi-agency Early Help Strategic Plan for Slough**
4. **Development of an Integrated Early Help Model – Early Help Collective (0-19)**
5. **Improved links through the Head of Service to Commissioning**
6. **Re-launch of CAF as Slough Early Help Assessment and Plan**

Council Re-Structures

7. **One Front Door to Social Work and Targeted Family Support Services**
8. **Targeted Family Support Service (0-18)**
9. **Resource and workforce implications**

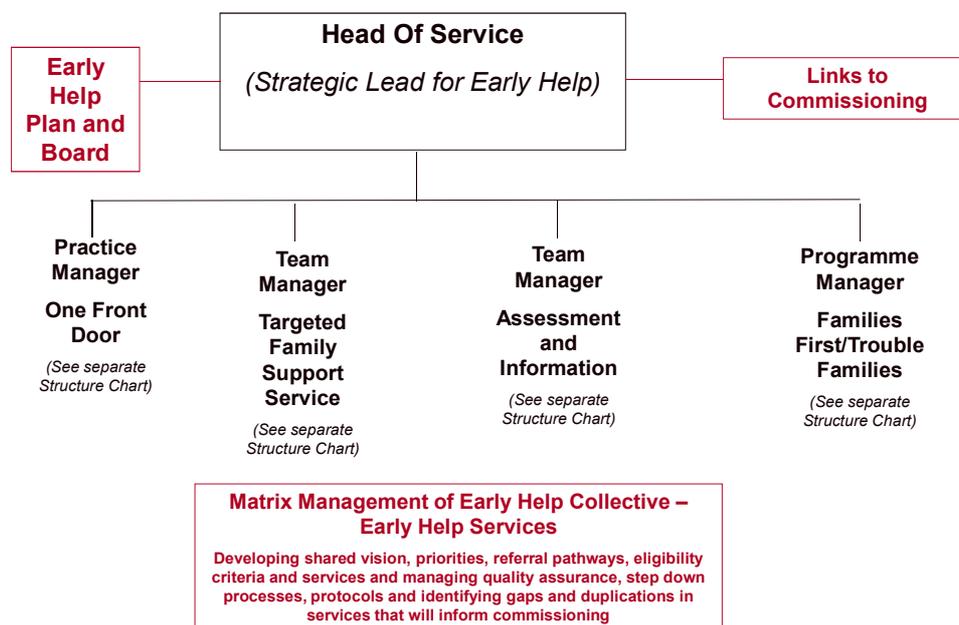
Consultation and Communication – goes across all work streams



4.2 Creation of Head of Service (Early Help) post

It is recommended that a new post is created to lead on the strategic development and operational delivery of Early Help services. The Head of Service (Early Help) should be a senior management post based within Slough MBC, but with a clear focus on partnership development of strategy and integrated service delivery for early help. The key responsibilities for the post are proposed below:

- Strategic partnership lead for Early Help in Slough
- Review and refresh the multi-agency Early Help Strategic Plan for Slough that informs commissioning
- Line management responsibility for the One Front Door for contacts and referrals to Children’s Social Care and Targeted Family Support Service
- Line management responsibility for development and delivery of a Targeted Family Support Service (see below)
- Line manage the Families First (Troubled Families) Co-ordinator
- Lead for the operation and development of the Integrated Early Help Network (see below) with partner agencies and organisations
- Lead on Common Assessment Framework (Early Help Assessment and Plan) processes and quality and line manage staff
- Development of integrated pathways for support to children, young people and families across a continuum of need
- Development of ‘whole family’ approaches to integrated and co-ordinated family support with partner agencies

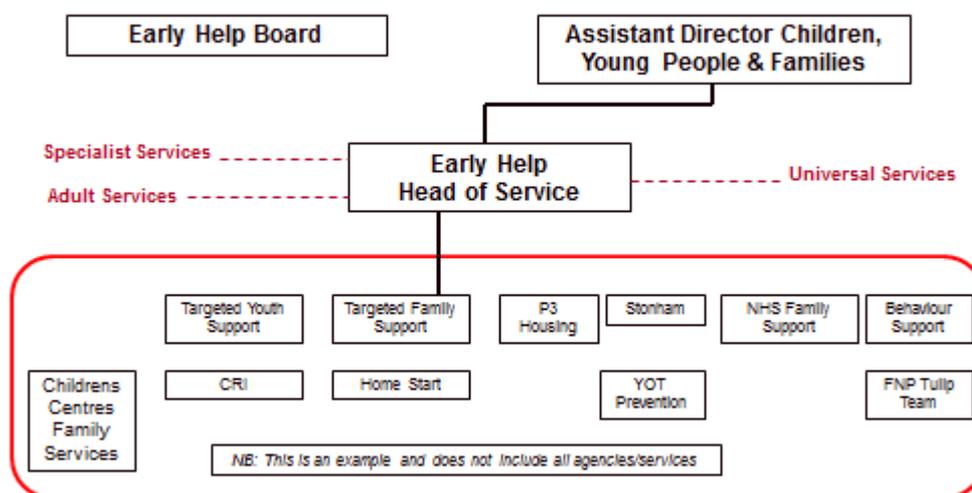


4.3 Integrated Early Help Collective (0 – 19)

Early help spans a range of support and services across the thresholds of need, including the additional support that universal services provide; support from the many voluntary, community and faith organisations in Slough; and targeted services delivered by agencies within Slough partnership arrangements. It is recommended that an integrated Early Help Collective is created to improve pathways and service delivery for vulnerable families with children aged 0 – 19 in Slough, across this range of early help support.

Services within the Early Help Collective would benefit from this arrangement by:

- Formation of a Virtual Management Team of senior representatives from the Core Group of services (a smaller group of services delivering targeted support), which meets on a regular basis e.g. monthly, chaired by the Head of Service (Early Help)
- increasing understanding of priorities within the Early Help Strategic Plan for Slough
- enhancing understanding of other early help services in Slough, including referral pathways, eligibility criteria and the type of support available
- developing shared vision and values for early help, including whole family approaches
- clarifying and improving pathways through the continuum of need and step up, step down procedures between universal, targeted and specialist services
- jointly identifying gaps and duplication in services that could inform the commissioning process about unmet need and more efficient use of local resources
- improving joint working and co-ordination of approaches across different services, supported by joint protocols where appropriate
- developing ways of measuring outcomes for children, young people and families
- sharing learning about effective practice at local level
- increasing joint workforce development opportunities



4.4 Slough Early Help Assessment– formerly CAF

The key elements of multi-agency working are: effective sharing of information, clear communication between agencies, quality common and shared assessments, effective planning, review of plans, clear interventions which are outcome focussed and can measure impact and outcomes.

“Assessments should be a dynamic process, which analyses and responds to the changing nature and level of need and/or risk faced by the child. A good assessment will monitor and record the impact of any services delivered to the child and family and review the help being delivered. The assessment should be focused on the needs of the child and on the impact any services are having on the child.” (WTSC 2013)

It is evident that there have been problems with implementing and ‘owning’ the CAF process across many agencies in Slough. It is the right time to undertake a full review of the current CAF process and use this as an opportunity to re-badge and re-launch a new Early Help Assessment document and process, which will include:

- Review of the eCAF system
- A single ‘Assessment Framework’ across the thresholds of need which aims to align all assessments and makes it clear which assessments should be used.
- Review of the current CAF process, structure, flow charts and guidance for agencies
- Name of assessment and marketing of new model and process
- Ownership and sign up by all agencies – developing a multi-agency response
- A focus on the more complex and vulnerable children and families
- The use of the assessment document as a referral
- A Whole Family Approach
- Role of the Lead Professional
- Role and function of the Team around the Child/Family meeting
- Use of SMART Action Plans – and the measurement of these
- Quality Assurance – a major issue in terms of quality of current CAFs and future auditing and performance management
- Looking at the role of front line managers
- Developing a new training programme, using professionals from across partner agencies
- Roles and responsibilities of agencies, including universal services who will have a role in ‘holding and supporting’ children

The focus will be on multi-agency practice and outcomes **NOT** just processes. The recommendation is to put in more capacity to making this work. The staff structure below shows this and shows an alignment to the Family Information Service.



Working Together to Safeguard Children (2013) outlines some key principles and parameters of a **good assessment** stating that high quality assessments:

- “Are child centred. Where there is a conflict of interest, decisions should be made in the child’s best interests;
- Are rooted in child development and informed by evidence;
- Are focused on action and outcomes for children;
- Are holistic in approach, addressing the child’s needs within their family and wider community;
- Ensure equality of opportunity;
- Involve children and families;
- Build on strengths as well as identifying difficulties;
- Are integrated in approach;
- Are a continuing process not an event;
- Lead to action, including the provision and review of services; and
- Are transparent and open to challenge.”

Training programmes should focus on how to undertake a good assessment. This includes taking a systematic approach looking at three domains: “**the child’s developmental needs**, including whether they are suffering or likely to suffer significant harm; **parents’ or carers’ capacity to respond** to those needs; and the impact and **influence of wider family, community and environmental circumstances**”. (WTSC 2013) It is important that professionals look at the interaction between the different domains and use their professional judgement to assess the child’s needs and/or risks. Information needs to be gathered systematically, checked and discussed with the child and the family and the impact of what is happening to the child is clearly identified and recorded. Where the child and family are receiving more than one service, assessments need to be co-ordinated or brought together so that there is no confusion, duplication and that professionals do not lose sight of the needs and risks of the child.

4.5 One Front Door to Social Work and Targeted Family Support Services

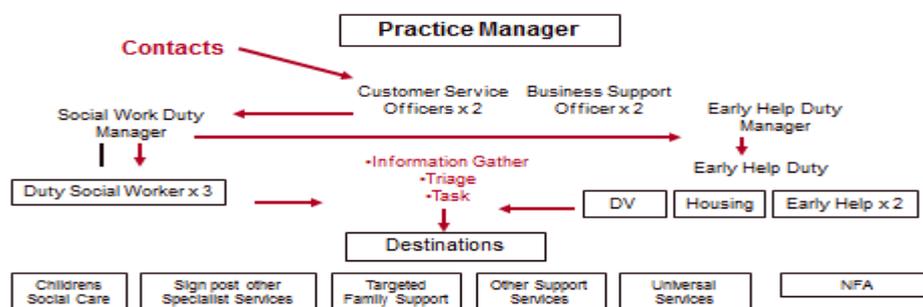
It is recommended that Slough look at a model of a single referral point or ‘One Front Door’ to Social Work and Targeted Family Support Services. Whilst the main focus is on Social Care and Targeted Services, it would also offer a pathway to other specialist, targeted and universal services.

It is important that this model of an integrated duty service is **not** an extension to the current CSC duty service but is developed as a new service, with a shared vision and culture, a multi-disciplinary team and revised procedures. It is a combined duty system with professionals from different backgrounds ensuring that **all** referrals are processed and sent through quickly to the most appropriate service or ‘destination’. The key is that children, young people and families get a service as soon as there is sufficient information to make a decision on the destination.

It is proposed that all agencies and members of the public who believe there is a need for involvement from **either** Children’s Social Care **or** the Targeted Family Support Service make contact with the One Front Door. After basic information-gathering from Customer Support Officers, the Duty Social Worker Manager will decide if the threshold for Children’s Social Care is met. If the threshold is not met, the details will be passed across to the Duty Early Help Manager. With assistance from a multi-skilled team (including Domestic Abuse and Housing workers), the Duty Early Help Manager will decide which service in Slough appears to be the most appropriate to provide support to the family based on the level and type of need. This has been termed the most appropriate ‘destination’ for the referral. The destination options include the Targeted Family Support Service, Targeted Youth Support Service, Children’s Centre support, other early help support services in Slough, universal services, other specialist services, or no further action. An essential element of the One Front Door arrangement is that that professional discussions between the two ‘arms’ of the service – Children’s Social Care and Early Help – can take place early and easily to achieve a seamless service and more consistency around the CSC threshold.

A diagram of the model is shown below.

Integrated Duty Service for targeted & Specialism Services for Children & Families



The aim of the team is to gather information, triage and make a decision as quickly as possible so that referrals can be made to the appropriate service as soon as possible. Children, young people and families will receive appropriate assessments but more importantly will be signposted to the right service so that they get the support they need in a timely manner. There should be improved clarity, and more consistent application of thresholds. Whilst this is not intended to be the referral pathway for all children and family services (these will have their own referral pathways), it will signpost and assist the referrer to get to the right destination. But as stated, it is the main referral route for Children’s Social Care and the Targeted Family Support Service.

The **Phase 2** development of the One Front Door will include contributions from the police, health, and education practitioners.

4.6 Targeted Family Support Service (0 - 18)

It is recommended that the current Family Support Service is reconfigured into a Targeted Family Support Service (TFSS) providing a range of targeted intervention services for children from **0 to 18** years of age and their families. The service will focus on families at higher levels of need but below the threshold for statutory involvement via Children’s Social Care. This will include vulnerable families at Level 2b (Vulnerable Children) of the Slough Thresholds document and some families at Level 3 (High or Complex Needs).

<p>Level 2 Slough Threshold of Need: (Note this is subject to review)</p> <p>2a Vulnerable These children have low level additional needs that are likely to be short-term and that may be known but are not being met.</p> <p>2b Vulnerable Child’s needs are not clear, not known or not being met. Child has additional needs and requires multi-agency intervention. Lead professional and Team around the Child.</p> <p>Level 3 High or Complex Needs – Additional needs requiring integrated targeted support (not the CIN work which will be Children’s Social Care)</p>

The Targeted Family Support Service will not be the only early help service in Slough, and should prioritise its focus on those families where research shows the needs and concerns are most likely to lead to statutory intervention in the future. It is therefore proposed that the **eligibility criteria** for the Targeted Family Support Service should be families with:

- **Parental mental health concerns**
- **Parental substance misuse (drugs and alcohol)**
- **Domestic violence**
- **Neglect**
- **Multiple and complex needs (below CSC threshold)**
- **AND where any of the above issues are resulting in compromised parenting.**

It is always difficult defining eligibility criteria, so final decisions on whether a referral is appropriate for the team will be made by the Team Manager who will use her/his professional judgement. The overall aim is to ensure children get a service so at a strategic level all services will be reviewed in terms of ensuring that collectively we meet the needs of all vulnerable children, young people and families in Slough.

The service specification for the Targeted Family Support will incorporate the following:

- Hold cases at Level 2b and some families at Level 3 (Slough Thresholds)
- Co-work CIN and CPP cases with Social Care
- Referrals into the service will be through the One Front Door or will be step-down from Social Care
- Child centric approach – keeping children ‘centre stage’ while supporting parents
- Adopt a ‘Whole Family’ approach – considering the family as a whole but looking at impact on the child
- Act as the Lead professional – a dedicated worker, dedicated to the family
- Adopt a multi-disciplinary approach to meeting need
- Ensure there is an individual assessment for each child (in line with revision of CAF process)
- Ensure there is a plan with measurable outcomes for each child
- Review the plan on a regular basis through a Team Around the Child/Family meeting
- Needs led service, assessment and interventions based on individual needs of the child
- Adopt a Family Assets approach, building on family strengths and working with the family to promote motivation and lasting change (Fig 1)
- Meet the diverse needs of the child/family by providing a range of evidence based interventions – a flexible, responsive and timely service
- Adopt a restorative practice approach
- Use volunteers and peer mentors to support access to services and continuation of support.

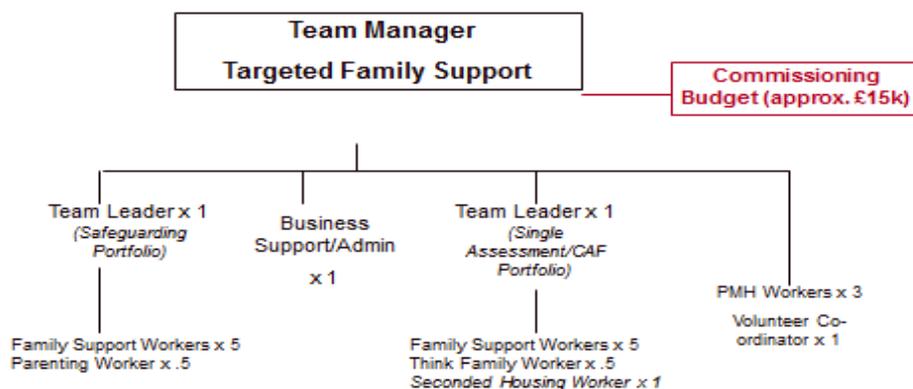
(Fig 1)

Family Deficit approach	Family Assets approach
Weaknesses, disabilities & dysfunction	Strengths, abilities & capacities
Outside in approach from professionals – ‘do to’	Inside out approach that supports intrinsic change & self-motivation
Consumers of services, dependency	Partners in provision of services, promoting increased independence
Silo approach by agencies looking in at the family	Collaboration between agencies and family
Family members are clients and victims of problems – ‘do for’	Family members are citizens and active participants in solutions – ‘do with’

Support and interventions will include:

- Family casework – looking at relationships, roles and responsibilities, family dynamics, building self-esteem and motivation to change, empowerment, family resilience
- Child development advice (attachment, care and boundaries)
- Parenting support (including 1:1 and accredited groupwork programmes)
- Support for parental mental health problems, substance misuse, domestic abuse – linking with adult services to ensure a co-ordinated whole family approach
- Direct work with vulnerable children and young people, either 1:1 or in groups
- Practical support – establishing family routines, budgeting, healthy lifestyles (GP, dentist, vaccinations, healthy eating, smoking), managing critical times e.g. mornings, bedtimes
- Quick wins e.g. getting appliances fixed or replaced, negotiating fuel debt repayments, providing school uniform etc
- Education support – school attendance, behaviour, parental engagement with schools, family literacy, school readiness
- Employment support, links with ESF & Work programmes, accredited learning, volunteer opportunities
- Managing risky behaviour – keeping children and young people safe, youth crime prevention, sexual health, engagement in positive activities
- Restorative practice approaches to resolve conflict and repair relationships
- Planning with the family to avoid sanctions e.g. eviction, statutory child care intervention
- Advocacy, negotiation and brokerage with agencies to achieve better outcomes for the family

The service would use Volunteers and Mentors to support families as a step-down from the Targeted Family Support Service. This offers continuity for those families and can help prevent re-referral and ensure sustainability of improved outcomes.



It is suggested that the service has a small commissioning budget. There are several advantages attached to the commissioning budget:

- Provide flexible services buy buying in specialist service such as counselling, play therapy, specialist groups
- Buy in positive activities packages as part of the planned work with children and young people
- Fund items or equipment which will improve outcomes for children
- Use as a reward fund linked to the Families First (Troubled Families) work

5. Families First ‘Troubled Families’

We recognise that the national Troubled Families programme, known in Slough as Families First, needs to be integrated with the overall provision of early help, and that processes and responsibilities need to be clear in respect of identification of families, co-ordination of service delivery and collation of outcomes data. A new post of Families First Programme Manager has been created.

The model of working with families will be the same as for Targeted Family Support Service, but with an additional focus on the Payment by Results required outcomes where the DCLG criteria are met within the family. The Families First Programme Manager will ‘commission’ the following services to deliver the programme:

- Targeted Family Support Service
- Targeted Youth Support Service
- Youth Offending Service
- Pupil Referral Units
- Housing Services

These services will deliver a ‘whole family’ approach using the ‘lead professional’ model but will collate data to ensure that Slough can evidence outcomes when claiming funding.

6. Workforce Development

Development of the workforce to ensure they have the relevant skills, knowledge and approaches to provide effective and integrated early help for vulnerable families in Slough is key to meeting needs, improving outcomes and preventing escalation to statutory services. The Children’s Development Workforce Council identified six areas of common core skills and knowledge that are seen as essential competencies, which are:

- effective communication and engagement with children, young people and families
- child and young person development
- safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the child or young person
- supporting transitions
- multi-agency and integrated working
- sharing information

The 2020 Children’s Workforce Strategy report (2008) further recommended a framework for workforce reform, setting out seven key areas where local Children’s Trusts needed to make progress in order to improve outcomes for children, young people and families. These areas, which would fit well with the development of terms of reference for an Early Help Collective in Slough, are:

- Shared identity, purpose and vision
- Common values and language
- Behaviours focused on positive outcomes for children and young people
- Integrated working practices
- High quality, appropriately trained workforce
- Complementary roles focused around children and young people
- Capacity to deliver and keep children safe

There is clearly a wide range of skills and experience already amongst those agencies that could form together to become the Early Help Collective. A recommended area of focus for the Collective would be to take an overview of workforce development needs in the light of the above national recommendations, but also in recognition of Early Help being one of the three priorities within Slough's current Workforce Development Strategy.

More recent research into the factors for successful engagement with families where there were complex and multiple needs highlight some key workforce development needs for staff that would be working within targeted services:

- Whole family approaches
- Engagement skills with families with multiple and complex needs
- Family assessment and planning
- Evidence based practice for complex family issues
- Restorative practice/solution focused therapy
- TAF co-ordination
- Supervision and reflective practice

7. Adult Services

In families with multiple and complex needs, it is likely that a large number of agencies and professionals may be involved, often with adults in the family e.g. for issues such as domestic abuse, parental mental health and substance misuse. Although there is limited evidence of systematic working together between adult and children's services in Slough, this is an area of multi-disciplinary and multi-agency working that could be enhanced by joint workforce development focusing on a Think Family approach. Holistic whole family working would improve outcomes for children, young people and adults in families.

8. Resources

A full analysis of resources, including budgets has been considered as part of this report. Following consultation with HR, a detailed Consultation Report has been submitted for consideration and will go through the normal Slough process.

9. Consultation and Communication

There is a detailed Communication and Consultation Strategy. It highlights the plan to use the whole of October to launch the work contained in this report. This will include all staff and agencies and give Slough the opportunity to positively promote the work being undertaken and get a full sign up to improving early help services.

Viv Murray and Sue Cook – July 2013