



Oldham
Council

Report to CABINET

Support to Vulnerable People - Commissioned Early Help Services

Portfolio Holder: Cabinet Member - Policing and Community Safety (Councillor Ateeque Ur-Rehman)

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Reason for Decision

The Early Help Service was established in April 2015. Some of the Early Help delivery is in-house, however a significant element of it is delivered through a contract with Positive Steps. The contract was let for three years (to March 2018), with an option to extend for up to a further additional year. This option was exercised and the contract ends on 31st March 2019.

We are close to completing a strategic review of the Council and key partners approach to early intervention and prevention. This review will make recommendations about investment in, commissioning and design of preventative services for both adults and children on a place based footing that may have direct relevance to this contract(s) and how going forward the service provided integrates with other preventative activity taking place in communities. An extension of twelve months to the current contract with Positive Steps will allow the implications of these recommendations to be worked through and implemented.

This report therefore requests an extension to the contract for a further one year period until March 2020.

Recommendations

Cabinet are recommended to approve the extension to the Early Help Service contract with Positive Steps contract for one year, to March 2020.

Early Help Service - Positive Steps Contract

1. Background

1.1 Oldham's Early Help Service was set up in April 2015 and was formed from a range of around 20 existing services. It was tasked with:

- Engaging residents in resolving their own issues;
- Supporting them to understand the root cause of their issues;
- Supporting them to resolve those issues
- Supporting them to learn strategies which will help prevent the reoccurrence of issues

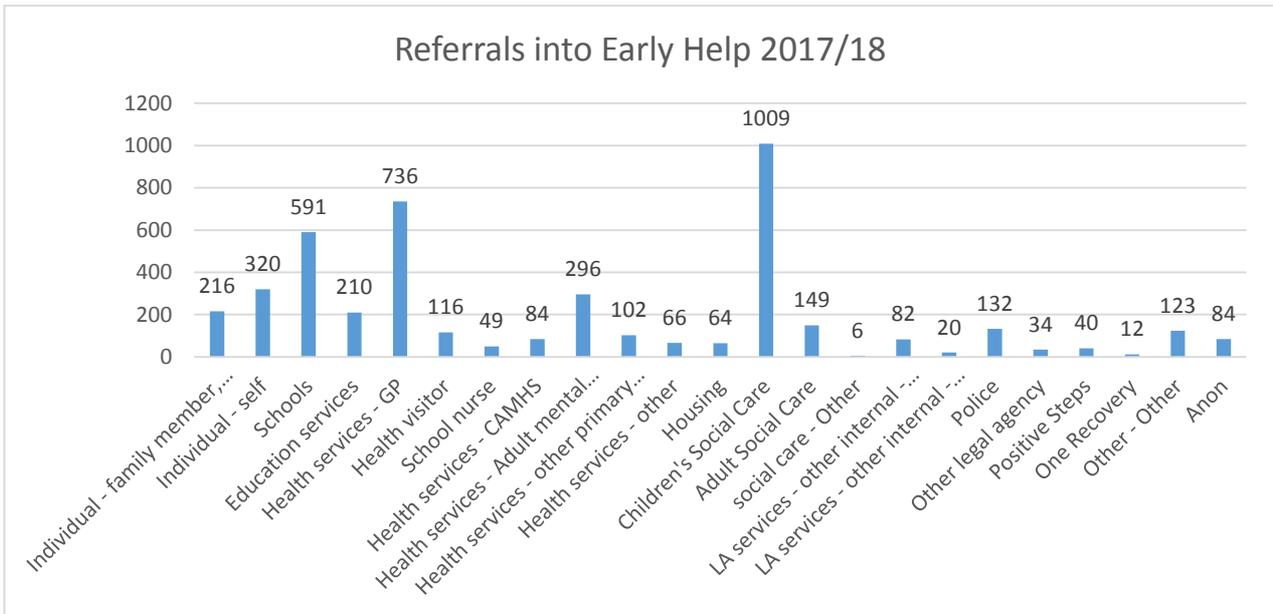
1.2 This required significant culture change, particularly:

- A new way of engaging (connecting) with residents
- Award winning 'engagement' training for staff, which has resulted in 95% engagement rates with the service. The training encourages staff to explore their working practices, attitudes and barriers to engagement; develop the skills to overcome those barriers; and gain an understanding of the three key developmental deficits commonly found in clients struggling to engage:
- Emotional regulation
- Emotional Literacy
- Problem solving skills
- A new way to assess support needs, which resulted in the development of the 'Bullseye' self-assessment tool, which is an easily understood and very visual tool, which families find easy to engage with. It also provides a clear measure of how families feel they are doing in terms of taking control of their lives:

1.3 Under this contract Positive Steps also deliver community health checks and smoking cessation support.

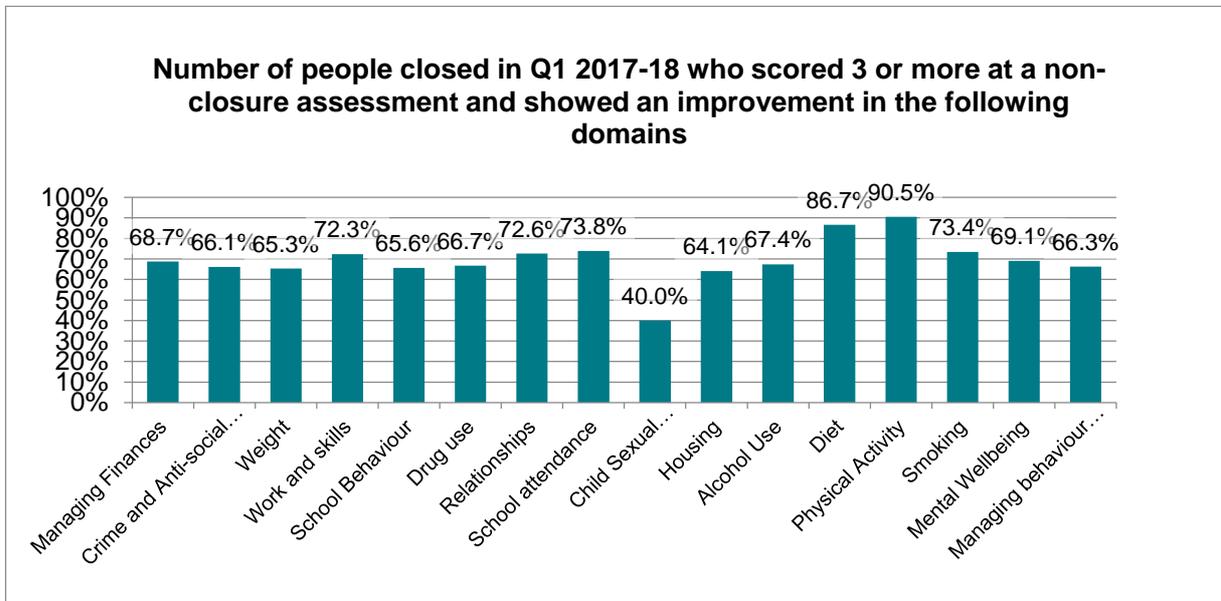
2. Delivery of the Service

2.1 The chart below shows the range of referring organisations.



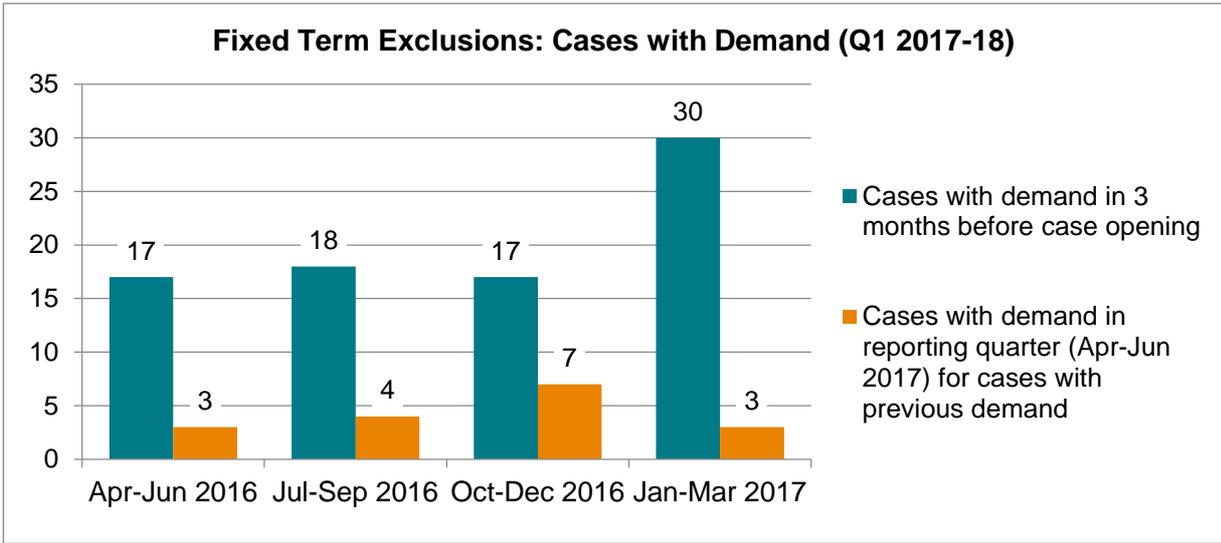
2.2 During 2017/18 alone, Early Help worked with 4541 households. All referrals come through Early Help in the MASH where they are checked with MASH partners to ensure we have all required information, and then allocated to the appropriate teams based on the level of need. Numbers of referrals into the service have consistently exceeded targets, in 2017/18 4541 referrals were received, a 120% increase from 2015/16. The broad range of agencies referring in demonstrates the breadth of reach and understanding of the Early Help offer across different service areas. The number of self-referrals has increased significantly over the last three years, again suggesting behaviour change, residents doing things for themselves and self-referring.

2.3 Positive outcomes were achieved across the range of issues that Early Help supported residents with:

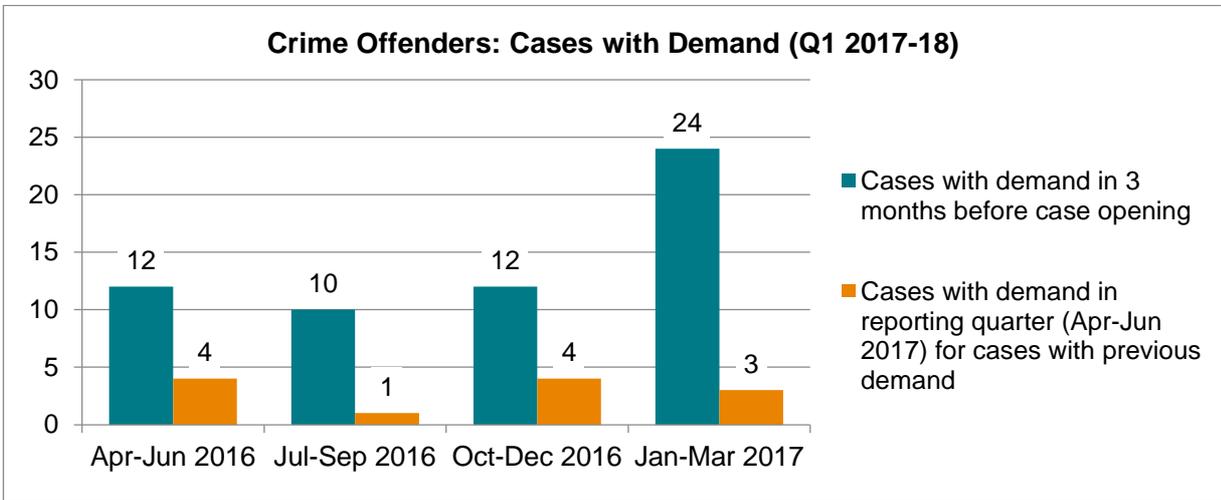


2.4

- This has resulted in a reduction in demand on education:



- and on crime:



2.4.1 Positive Steps remain a valued delivery partner and have demonstrated their willingness and ability to develop their service offer in line with commissioner expectations and reducing budgets.

3. Early Help development: next steps

3.1 We are close to completing a strategic review of the Council and key partners approach to early intervention and prevention. This review will make recommendations about investment in, commissioning and design of preventative services for both adults and children on a place based footing that may have direct relevance to this contract(s) and how going forward the service provided integrates with other preventative activity taking place in communities. An extension of twelve months to the current contract with Positive Steps will allow the implications of these recommendations to be worked through and implemented.

3.2 An independent review conducted of the current Early Help offer in spring 2017 confirmed that Early Help has achieved many good outcomes and is a positive and innovative model that is at the forefront of service development both regionally and nationally. The review acknowledged however that there had been considerable changes in the landscape since

the service was introduced at both GM and local level. A key reason for undertaking the review in 2017 was because Early Help is not on a sustainable financial footing and has been supported by use of reserves.

3.3 The Early Help contribution to reducing demand on Children's Social Care, is something that needs to be developed further within our emerging Oldham Family Connect approach (based on the Stockport Family model) linked to the GM Children's Services Transformation programme.

3.4 The current Early Help contract with Positive Steps ends on 31st March 2019. In order to maintain service continuity whilst the new arrangements are developed, it is therefore necessary to secure an interim arrangement for 2019/20. This will also align the end date of the contract with other services provided by Positive Steps.

4. **Options**

4.1 The following explores options for ensuring continuity of the Early Help service in the interim period between April 2019 and March 2020.

4.2 Option 1: Extend the existing Positive Steps contract

Significant time and effort went into establishing the Early Help service within Positive Steps and developing a staff culture that focused on enabling residents to develop the skills to effectively manage their own lives. Significant effort also went into incorporating a range of complementary activity (in particular, health checks and smoking cessation work) into the delivery model. This took a significant portion of the first year to fully embed and is now operating effectively and achieving very positive outcomes, as highlighted above.

Extending the contract with Positive Steps for one year would enable us to build on this and continue delivering positive outcomes within the context of the wider strategic review.

4.3 Option 2: Allow the contract to end on March 31st 2019

Whilst this option would result in revenue savings for 219/20 there would be an immediate impact on service delivery and subsequent pressure on both the Council delivered element of Early Help but also on specialist services such as adult and children's social care. The delivery of several key activities would need an alternative delivery model and if such arrangements were established some Positive Steps staff would have TUPE rights with any new provider. This option presents a significant risk to outcomes for families.

Preferred Option

4.4 Option 1 is the preferred option, to extend the existing contract until 31st March 2020.

5. **Consultation**

5.1 Stakeholder workshops have taken place in relation to the future options for Early Help and the development of Oldham Family Connect.

6. **Financial Implications**

6.1 The cost remains the same as in 2018/19; maintaining the contract sum at the current cost negates the impact of annual inflationary increases and represents a saving in real terms.

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- 6.4 There is an on-going review of the Early Help delivery model, scheduled to be completed for implementation in 2020/21, part of which is addressing the cost base of the service. This will allow for a consideration of the on-going funding requirement for the service which will be an element of the 2020/21 budget process.

(Jenny Howarth Senior Accountant/Andy Cooper Senior Finance Manager)

7. **Legal Services Comments**

Contained in the Commercially confidential report.

8. **Co-operative Agenda**

- 8.1 The Early Help service has been developed specifically in order to support the Council's Co-operative agenda. It is focused on providing the support to residents that they need in order to develop the skills to be able to help themselves.

9. **Human Resources Comments**

- 9.1 There are no implications for local authority staff.

10. **Risk Assessments**

- 10.1 The risks of the preferred option are minimal, because it is continuing with the current position. As noted above and in the financial comments, the main risk is financial.

11. **IT Implications**

- 11.1 Positive Steps will need to continue providing case management and reporting information, using appropriate IT systems.

12. **Property Implications**

- 12.1 None

13. **Procurement Implications**

14. **Environmental and Health & Safety Implications**

- 14.1 None

15. **Equality, community cohesion and crime implications**

- 15.1 None as the proposal is to continue with the current service delivery model.

16. **Equality Impact Assessment Completed?**

- 16.1 No

17. **Key Decision**

- 17.1 Yes

18. **Key Decision Reference**

18.1 PCS-01-18.

19. **Background Papers**

19.1 None

20. **Appendices**

20.1 None