

Report of the Corporate Director of Children, Education and Communities

## **Local Area Teams - Update**

### **Summary**

1. This report provides an update on early help and Local Area Team arrangements. These arrangements launched in January 2017 with the aim of:
  - a. Preventing the escalation of needs which may require, if not addressed, statutory, complex and costly interventions at a later point.
  - b. Reducing inequality of outcomes for our children and young people in communities across York.

### **National context**

2. Nationally the early help landscaped has changed significantly as Local Authorities respond to changing resources and changing needs of families. This is also true in York and Local Area Teams has been the council's response to reshaping early help arrangements. It should be noted that Working Together 2018 clearly sets out that early help is a multi-agency responsibility and not for the local authority to solely deliver.
3. There is a patchwork of statutory requirements underpinning the work of Local Area Teams. This includes the Children Act 2004, Childcare Act 2006, Education and Skills Act 2008, Children and Families Act 2014. Working Together 2018 summarises the expectation on multi-agency partners, including the local authority, in relation to early help
  - a. "Providing early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later. Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life, from the foundation years through to the teenage years. Early help can also prevent further problems arising; for example, if it is provided

as part of a support plan where a child has returned home to their family from care, or in families where there are emerging parental mental health issues or drug and alcohol misuse. Effective early help relies upon local organisations and agencies working together to:

- i. identify children and families who would benefit from early help
- ii. undertake an assessment of the need for early help
- iii. provide targeted early help services to address the assessed needs of a child and their family which focuses on activity to improve the outcomes for the child.

## Background

4. Local Area Teams (LATs) are a key component of York’s early help offer for children, young people and families. LATs launched in January 2017 following the restructure of a number of historical council services (e.g. children’s centres, youth services, Connexions, Castlegate, Family Information Service etc). In August 2017 the Healthy Child Service was integrated into Local Area Teams following their restructure and relocation into the Local Authority.
5. The introduction of Local Area Teams represented the need to introduce a new way of working. Historically the council played a leading role in undertaking interventions with children, young people and families. The new role required us to move into a different way of working that has become known as the “building blocks”. The table below summarises the aspirations in relation to how our work would change.

<b>Problem Solve</b>	<b>Build Capacity</b>	<b>Direct Work</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify need</li> <li>• Broker and coordinate solution</li> <li>• Provide advice</li> <li>• Provide support and challenge</li> <li>• Information share</li> <li>• Use data and local knowledge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build communities</li> <li>• Use community resources</li> <li>• Identify gaps in provision</li> <li>• Identify gaps in knowledge and skill</li> <li>• Provide training</li> <li>• Develop volunteers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop range of access and info points</li> <li>• Individual work</li> <li>• Group interventions</li> <li>• Advocate</li> </ul>

6. The building blocks approach can be summarised as developing the capacity of the community and partners to do more and to have a greater level of resilience. Our interventions should always be proportionate and escalating according to need.
7. Annex A provides examples of how the new way of working has been applied in practice.

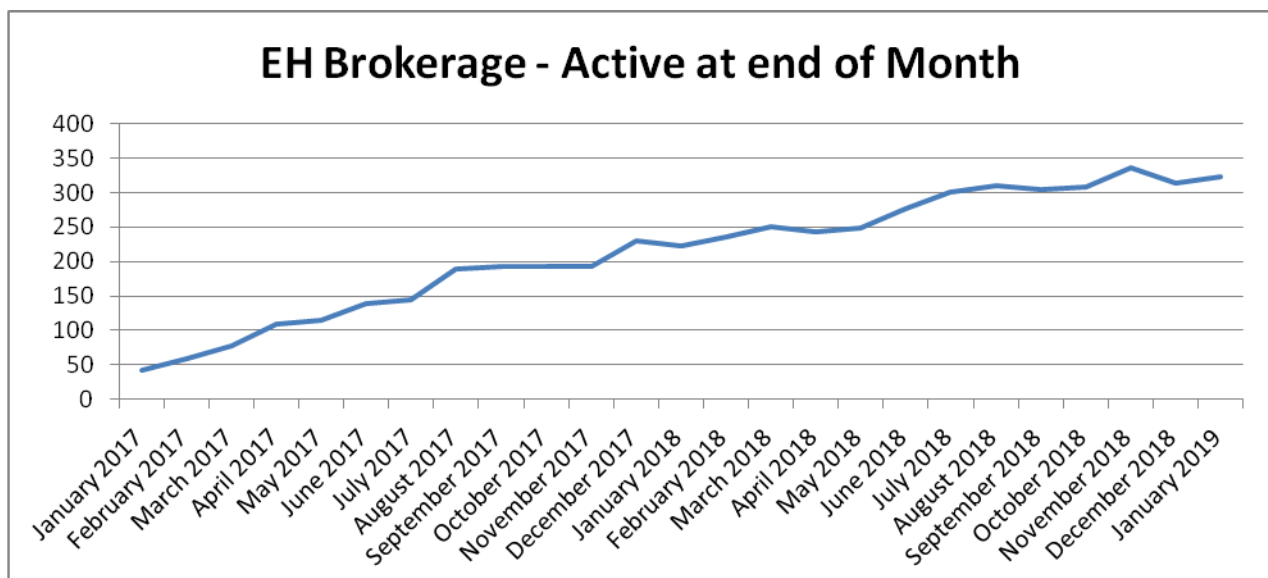
### **Areas of Strength**

8. There are many elements of Local Area Teams which are functioning well and delivering good performance. For example; good working relationships with schools, developing integration with the Healthy Child Service (HCS), improved HCS performance, sustained performance for Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET), take up of two year old childcare, problem solving within localities, capacity building with community groups, development of a new commissioning model and Troubled Families performance improving.
9. Key performance information includes:
  - a. From 1<sup>st</sup> August 2018 to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2019 10,566 attendances have been recorded at children's centre groups. Local Area Teams directly facilitate a limited set of groups with more now being delivered by voluntary and community partners.
  - b. Take-up of the two year old funded childcare has improved from 72% in 2015/16 to 78% in 2017/18.
  - c. The percentage of year 12-13 (academic age 16-17) young people who are NEET has remained strong from being 2.7% in 2016/17 and 2.3% in 2018/19 (Q3).
  - d. The number of active volunteers has increased from 131 in 2016/17 to 206 in 2017/18.
  - e. The performance of the Healthy Child Service against mandated 0-5 contacts has improved significantly.
10. Further work is required to demonstrate the long term impact of Local Area Teams. This has always presented a challenge for services in the early help arena but must continue to be a focus in order to demonstrate outcomes. The table below shows a simplistic measure of the outcome as measured at the point of Family Early Help Assessment closure. Local performance is compared to national figures from the ADCS

Safeguarding Pressures report<sup>1</sup>. Recording of early help work is widely variable from one area to another so only limited insight can be drawn from this comparison.

2017/18	York	National
Step up to social care	14%	13%
Step down (local definition 'successful intervention')	47.1%	17%
NFA (locally – not completed, moved out of area or disengaged)	38.8%	58%

11. The number of early help brokerages<sup>2</sup> has increased following the introduction of Local Area Teams. An early help brokerage is essentially where the Local Area Team is undertaking some level of work relating to a case. This could be supporting other practitioners through to direct work.
12. The changing level of early help brokerage work is shown in the graph below. This chart could support the view that Local Area Teams are working well with partners to identify needs with families. National reports highlight increasing levels of demand and increasing complexity at both an early help and specialist services level. In response to this effective demand management is seen as a priority for 2019. This is outlined in more detail later in this report.

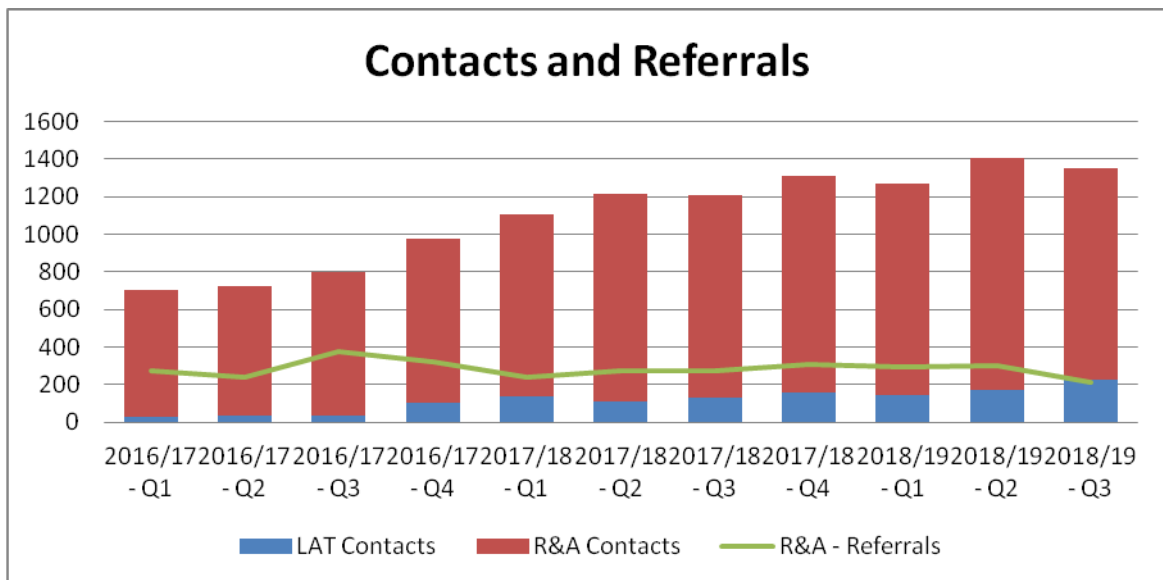


<sup>1</sup> The Association of Directors of Children's Services

[http://adcs.org.uk/assets/documentation/ADCS\\_SAFEGUARDING\\_PRESSURES\\_PHASE\\_6\\_FINAL.pdf](http://adcs.org.uk/assets/documentation/ADCS_SAFEGUARDING_PRESSURES_PHASE_6_FINAL.pdf)

13. The table and chart below show how the volume of contacts have changed over recent years. It shows contacts by:

- a. Local Area Teams – This essentially shows contacts and referrals for early help. Prior to January 2017 the figures relate to contacts undertaken with the former children’s advice team within the children’s Front Door.
- b. Referral and Assessment Contacts – This shows the number of contacts with children’s social care Referral and Assessment service. It represents contact with that service but does not represent the level of actual safeguarding referrals.
- c. Referral and Assessment Referrals – This shows the number of referrals to children’s social care Referral and Assessment service. It represents contact with that service but does not represent the level of actual safeguarding referrals.



Year and Quarter	LAT Contacts	R&A Contacts	R&A - Referrals	R&A Referrals to Contacts %
2016/17 - Q1	28	674	274	40.65%
2016/17 - Q2	35	687	241	35.08%
2016/17 - Q3	34	764	378	49.48%
2016/17 - Q4	107	870	323	37.13%
2017/18 - Q1	139	966	241	24.95%
2017/18 - Q2	110	1104	276	25.00%
2017/18 - Q3	133	1075	271	25.21%
2017/18 - Q4	159	1151	305	26.50%

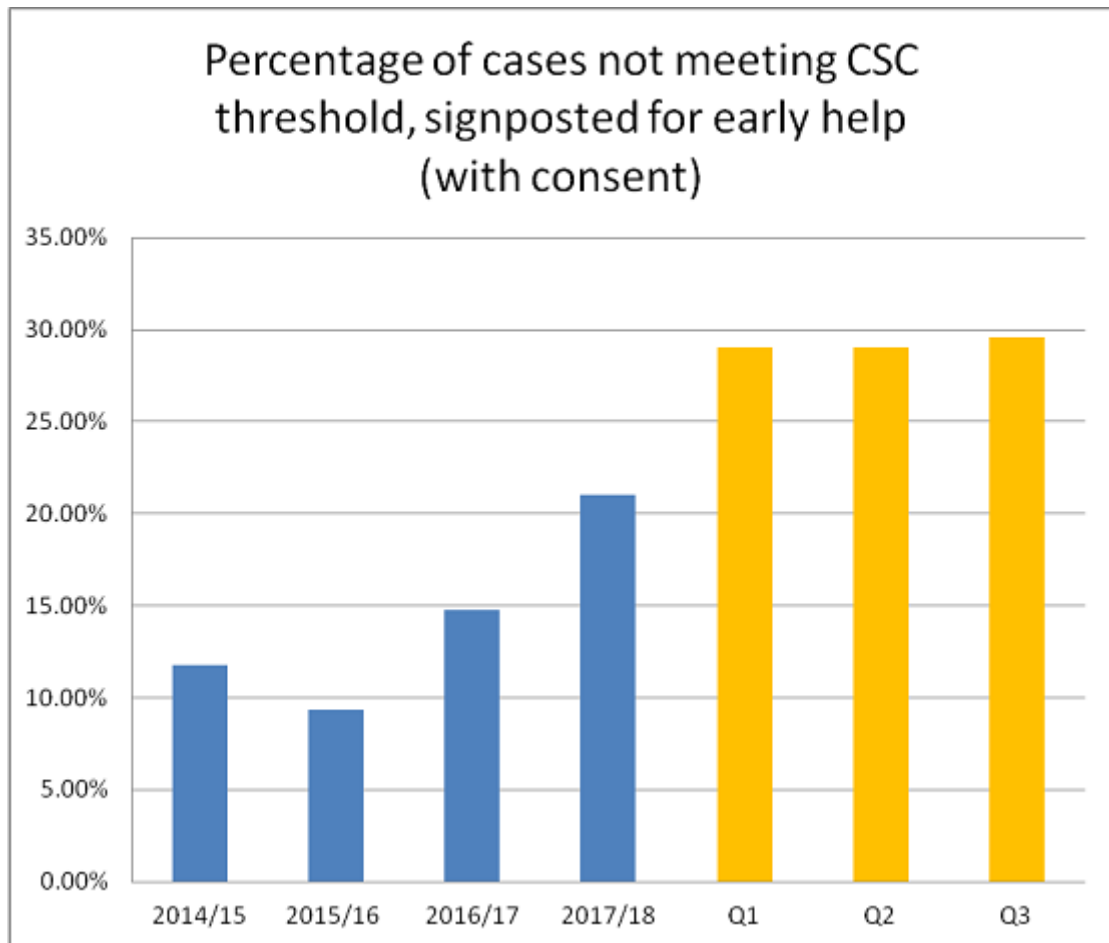
2018/19 - Q1	145	1126	296	26.29%
2018/19 - Q2	172	1232	300	24.35%
2018/19 - Q3	225	1126	210	18.65%

14. The chart and table of contacts and referrals can be read in a number of ways and poses some important questions:
- a. As expected there is an increase in the volume of early help contacts following the introduction of Local Area Teams.
  - b. We can see there has been an increase in the number of contacts being made to the Referral and Assessment service. This could be for a number of reasons. Given that number of contacts that are converted into referrals has remained steady it would suggest the increase in R&A contacts is made up of cases below the threshold for children's social care. Further exploration of this is required to ensure that as far as possible enquiries are dealt with safely but at an appropriate level in response to need.
15. The chart below shows the proportion of safeguarding referrals not meeting threshold that are signposted for early help. The 2017/18 national figure for comparison is 13.1%<sup>3</sup>.

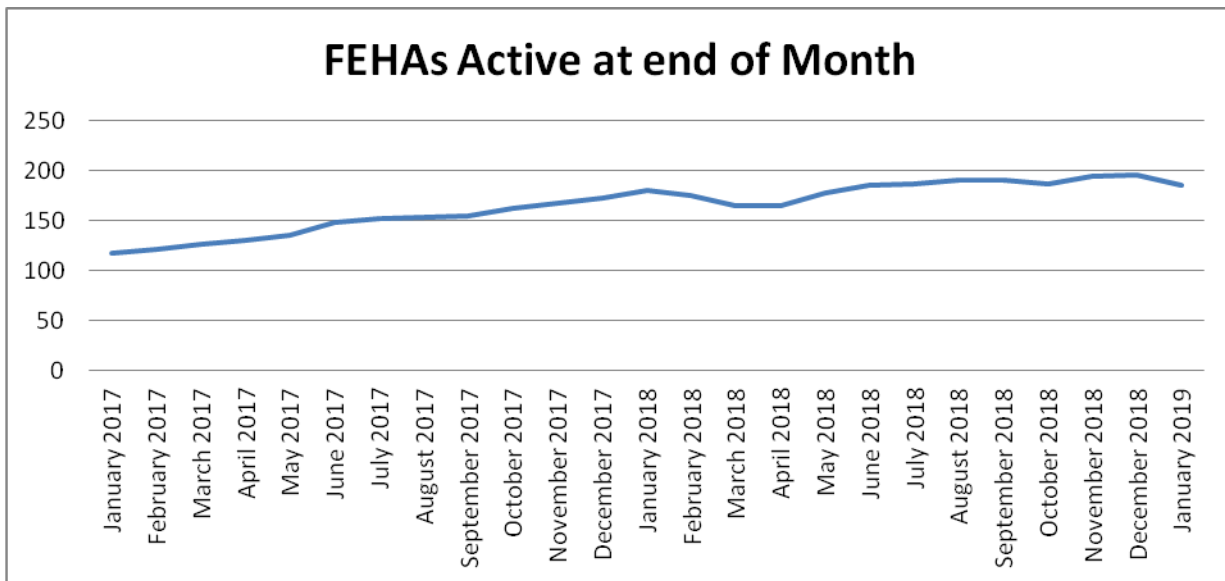
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16. There is an encouraging view to take from this graph showing a significant increase in the percentage of cases being signposted for early help. Rising levels of demand and complexity further emphasises the need to review demand management in 2019.
17. The number of Family Early Help Assessments in the city has increased following the introduction of Local Area Teams. This would suggest that more families should now be benefitting from the whole family assessments being in place. Due to reporting limitations it is not easy to see a breakdown of the number of FEHAs being lead on by Local Area Teams and the number being lead on by partner agencies However a sample of cases taken earlier in 2018 would suggest around 20% to 30% have a LAT member of staff as a lead practitioner and the rest undertaken by partners, predominantly schools.



18. The table below shows how York’s ratio of early help brokerage and FEHA rates compare to national equivalents. It should be noted though that there will be significant variation in what different areas will classify or count against these headings and as such we can only draw limited conclusions from this information. The national figures have come from research recently published by the Association for Directors of Children’s Services (ADCS).

<b>2017/18</b>	<b>York</b>	<b>National</b>
FEHA /10k 0-17 year olds	93	191
Early Help “Cases” /10k 0-17 year olds	232	139

19. Feedback from schools is broadly very positive. Each school has a “link worker” to support and develop their early help practice. For the purposes of this report feedback from primary and secondary schools in the West locality is shown below.

20. Schools have identified the following strengths of the link worker model:

- a. It has provided a point of contact for school to get Early Help Advice and Information therefore improving communication channels between schools and Services.
- b. It has championed the ‘whole family’ approach with schools and resulted in an increase in the number of Family Early Help Assessments.
- c. It has provided an opportunity to engage families within the home, therefore strengthening relationships between home and school



and improving information sharing, assessments and subsequent plans.

- d. It has provided a resource that schools can request that can offer direct work with children, young people and families when appropriate.

21. How has the Local Area Team made a difference to your schools? (In order of responses).

- a. Provided a Point of contact for advice and guidance
- b. 1:1/direct work with families
- c. Lead FEHA's
- d. Attend meetings with parents/support stuck cases
- e. Provide support from inside of the home
- f. Added capacity so we can support more families
- g. Provide support re attendance

22. What would help you make more of a difference at an early help level? (in order of responses)

- a. Reducing the paperwork to a minimum
- b. Link workers leading more complex cases
- c. Early Help training
- d. CSC sharing information better with schools
- e. A clear list of what Local Area Teams can offer schools
- f. More 1:1 support for families
- g. More of the schools budget designated for early help/pastoral support
- h. More time from the School link Worker
- i. Improved engagement of parents
- j. More community resources/groups to refer into

## **Areas for development**

23. As outlined above there are a number of encouraging elements to the work of Local Area Teams. However there remain a number of fundamental challenges in securing a sustainable and meaningful early help offer. A road map has been developed setting out key priorities for 2019. These are:
- a. To review the Local Area Team offer with a focus on definition, sustainability and impact.
  - b. To secure better multi-agency ownership of the early help agenda.
  - c. Effective demand management including the step-up and step-down interface with children's specialist services.
  - d. To develop the Healthy Child Service further.
  - e. Improved and consistent audits and case reviews whilst embedding meaningful use of performance information.
  - f. To further improve Troubled Families performance.
  - g. Strengthen workforce development.
  - h. Review voice arrangements.
24. These priorities will be progressed over 2019. Key actions of note for scrutiny are:
- a. A multi-agency audit of early help in York. This will be based around expectations of early help set out in Working Together 2018.
  - b. A multi-agency task and finish group to review early help across York. This will drive forward work to develop early help in York.
25. **Implications**
- Financial** – None.
- Human Resources (HR)** – None
- Equalities** – None
- Legal** – None

**Crime and Disorder** – None

**Information Technology (IT)** – None

**Property** – None

**Other** – None

### **Recommendations**

26. The committee are asked to:

- i) Note the contents of the report and progress to date.
- ii) Consider receiving a report later in the year to review progress in respect of:
  - a. The multi-agency audit of early help in York.
  - b. The feedback from the multi-agency task and finish group reviewing the wider multi-agency early help offer in York.

Reason: To comply with scrutiny procedures.

### **Contact Details**

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**Report  
Approved**



**Date** 1 March 2019

**For further information please contact the author of the report**

### **Annexes**

Annex A – Examples of early help work

### **Abbreviations**

ADCS- The Association of Directors of Children's Services Ltd

CSA- Child Sexual Abuse

FEHA- Family Early Help Assessment

LATS- Local Area Teams

HCS- Health Child Service

NEET- Not in Education Employment or Training

NFA- National Futures Association

R&A-Referral and Assessment

EH – Early Help