**South East Sector Led Improvement Programme**

**Early Help Project Scoping Paper**

1. **Context**

Following the publication of the Ofsted thematic report, *“Early Help: Whose Responsibility”*, the South East SLIP Steering Group considered the recommendations of the report and identified a number of potential options for further work. Following an options appraisal it was agreed that the area of work, which would be most beneficial to the South East local authorities was the development of a joint framework for the evaluation of the impact and effectiveness of early help interventions.

This area was felt to be a high priority because there is a clear duty to evaluate early help services. It was felt to be potentially beneficial to most local authorities and would provide an opportunity to share our expertise and further develop work in this area. The Ofsted thematic report highlighted that evaluation of early help interventions was largely under-developed. The report included the following statements:

* *“The quality assurance of early help work, including the quality of early help assessments and plans, needs to improve. The effectiveness of the response to identified needs, management oversight and application of locally agreed thresholds should be more consistent. In addition, there is very little evidence about the impact of early help where there are concerns about children and their families”.*
* No LA *“had scrutinised the effectiveness of the delivery of the [Early Help] strategy and its impact on improving outcomes for children at the earliest point or reducing the need for higher cost, more coercive help”.*
* “Many LSCBs recognised that they had not yet developed data to enable them to ‘assess the effectiveness of the help being provided to children and families’,as required by‘Working together to safeguard children’*.* Many were still working to secure regular reporting regarding early help and, at best, measurements of impact were still in the very early stages of development”.
* LSCBs are “not routinely monitoring the application of….thresholds”
* “Evaluation across the continuum of early help and statutory services required further significant development”.

1. **Project Leadership**

The project leads are Patrick Leeson (DCS, Kent) and Alison Jeffrey (AD- Early Help and Commissioning, East Sussex).

The lead SE SLIP consultant is Natalie Trentham.

1. **Objectives**

The aim of the project is to establish a framework, which can be used across the region, to measure the impact and effectiveness of early help services.

The framework should ensure that the focus is less on process compliance and more on the quality of work, effectiveness of services and the impact on children and families.

1. **The Framework**

The framework might draw upon data, audit and case studies. Munro would suggest that a bottom up approach is required. The framework might therefore use the journey of children to draw wider conclusions about effectiveness and inform strategic priorities.

The framework is likely to focus on recgognised adverse outcomes that not only cause harm to individuals but also result in a cost to public services. These include:

* Child abuse and neglect
* Antisocial behaviour, violence and crime
* Drug and alcohol abuse
* Teenage pregnancy
* Obesity
* NEET status; and
* Low school attainement

*(Taken from The Early Intervention foundation)*

It could encompass:

* The identification of needs (how children and families come to our attention, pathways for children at different ages and with different needs – including step up and down)
* The quality of assessments
* The quality of planning
* The quality of decision making
* Service provision
  + Timeliness of support
  + Strategies / focus of work
  + Partnership working and information sharing
  + Working with families to agree outcomes
  + Record keeping
  + Evidence of monitoring the impact of the service and auditing practice
* Outcomes for children and families
* Effectiveness of services Ithe degree to which outcomes are met) and cost. It could also include matching services to needs – identifying services that are aligned to meet the needs of the population, overlaps in services and gaps.

1. **Approach**

In order to develop the framework, the following approach is proposed:

* A review of current arrangements across the SE, through a semi-structured questionnaire and telephone interviews. Identifying best practice, sharing work and key contacts.
* Desktop analysis of relevant papers and research underpinning the parameters of the framework (including learning from Early Evaluation Partnerships).
* A small working group of LA / LSCB representatives to develop the framework. This task and finish group will be chaired by Patrick Leeson (DCS Kent) and it is anticipated that the work will be completed in approximately 3 meetings.
* Implementation of the framework to be agreed and any follow up work considered.

1. **Timescale**

The project will take place June-September 2015.

Natalie Trentham

16/06/15