

Equalities Monitoring – Services

E - Early Help

Annual Report - 2019-20



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Introduction

The purpose of equalities monitoring is to ensure the Council is providing a fair and equitable service to all residents. This report provides information in relation to equalities monitoring in Early Help, which sits within the People Directorate in the Council. Bracknell Forest prides itself as being the 'borough of opportunity' with a focus on ensuring that it stays prosperous and remains a good place to live, work and play. The council's corporate plan (2019 – 2023) commits to working with organisations to deliver joined-up, good quality local services that focus on individuals' needs and to ensure early help is available to the borough's most vulnerable residents. The borough's Children and Young People's Partnership Plan 2018-2021 (CYPPP) is explicit in its overarching ambition for its children and young people in that they:

- Have the opportunity to realise their potential and are not held back by disadvantage, inequality or neglect
- Are at the heart of our thinking and decision making
- Are engaged in decisions and their voices are heard and listened to

The CYPPP's five priority outcomes, set out below, have been agreed within the context of an organisational commitment to being open about its mistakes and striving to get things right by:

1. Ensuring all children are safe and protected
2. Working with partners to reduce the impact of poverty
3. Encouraging and promote well-being and resilience
4. Ensuring every child has access to quality education, helping them move into adulthood
5. Celebrating our children's successes and their contributions

Early Help works on the premise that children, young people and their families are offered help when needs and concerns are first identified and that the support provided improves their situation and supports sustainable progress.

As a targeted early help service, we are collectively committed to learning together and growing together to improve the outcomes and life chances for those we support. To ensure these aims are met we must be flexible and responsive to the changing needs and trends of the communities it supports.

In late 2019 the council's transformation of its in-house early help service established multi-disciplinary teams in a family hub arrangement across the borough. The family hubs, previously known as children's centres, provide 4 geographical locations, 2 in the south of the borough (Rowans and Alders) and 2 in the north (Oaks and Willows) from which both universal health provision and targeted early help is delivered. The family hubs comprise of Early Help Professionals (EHPs) with specialisms in family work, evidenced-based parenting and domestic abuse programmes, early years, youth work and education welfare, including children missing education. Alongside which health visitors and the community midwifery team are co-located to provide universal antenatal and postnatal services. More recently the forming of the Getting Help team has rectified the absence of a tier 2 mental health provision within early help.

Our overarching aims to support the delivery of targeted early help services in Bracknell Forest are committed to:

- embedding whole family working and striving to ensure all children are safe and protected
- engaging children and families in decisions, ensuring their voices are heard and listened to and they have positive experiences with the services we provide
- ensuring the services and activities we deliver are inclusive and value diversity and that through our increased understanding of the barriers experienced by our service users we improve accessibility to and quality of services

Access to the Service

Providing the right early help and the right time is far more effective in promoting the welfare of children and keeping them safe than reacting later when problems may have become more entrenched. Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)¹ sets out a clear expectation that local agencies collaborate to identify children and young people with additional needs and work together to ensure support as soon as a problem emerges. The services provided must be based on a clear understanding of the needs and views of the individual. As a tier 2 service, Early help works with children, young people and families where additional needs have been identified. It may include children who are showing early signs of neglect and/or abuse or where parents/carers have not prioritised the needs of their child/ren and/or there limited parenting capacity.

Access to the early help service is primarily through a referral to children's services front door whereupon the information provided in the referral will determine which team (family hub, youth service and Getting Help) is best suited to deliver the early help intervention. The decision made by the Front Door is based on Bracknell Forest's continuum of need². Referrals to early help are received from a wide range of services and can include self-referrals. Early help is a consent-based service. As part of the referral process there is an expectation that the referring agency will have consulted with the parent(s)/carer(s) and/or, the young person (where age appropriate), to obtain the relevant consent.

A number of families supported by early help have been identified as having at least 2 of the following characteristics which are aligned to the national Troubled Families programme:

- Parents and/or child involved in crime and/or anti-social behaviour
- Children who are not attending school regularly
- Children in need of help
- Parents/carers out of work or at risk of financial exclusion
- Families affected by domestic abuse and violence
- Parents/children with health needs

¹ Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) Department for Education

² Bracknell Forest Safeguarding Children Partnership Threshold Guidance. Understanding the continuum of help and support

Outcomes

Following allocation to a team within the early help service, an assessment will be undertaken in conjunction with the young person and their family. The assessment considers different aspects of the young person's and/or family life and includes relationships, emotional and physical and social and community networks. The outcome of the assessment will determine the intensity and duration of the support required, both of which are reviewed using a Team Around the Family/Child approach.

Equality Data - Referrals to Early Help by Age, Ethnicity and Sex (2019-2020)

Referrals by age 2019-20

Table (1) below shows the number of children, by age at the time of referral, receiving an early help intervention through an EHP in a family hub. A single family may have multiple children within the same age group range or spread across the age range groups.

Children, by age, supported by an Early Help Practitioner				
Age Group	No. of Children	% of Total Children	% of Bracknell Forest Population (0 – 18)	Variance
0 - 4	133	25%	2%	23%
5 - 10	193	37%	2%	35%
11 - 18	202	38%	2%	36%
Total	528	100%	2%	98%

Table (1)

Table (2) below shows number of young people, by age at the time of referral, receiving a targeted youth intervention, with the age range 10-15 years being the highest cohort, thereafter transition arrangements are considered, usually for a more targeted cohort, which is reflected in the significantly lower figure for age range 16- 18 years.

Young People, by age, receiving Targeted Youth Support				
Age (years)	No. of Young People	% of Total Young People	% of Bracknell Forest Population (0 – 18)	Variance
10 - 15	115	72%	1%	71%
16 - 18	45	28%	1%	27%
Total	160	100%	1%	99%

Table (2)

Table (3) below shows the number of Young Carers, by age, at the point of a Young Carers assessment being undertaken. Further analysis is required regarding the 5-10 years cohort given that children having caring responsibilities in this age range is of concern

Young Carers (by age) At Point of Assessment				
Age (years)	No. of Young Carers	% of Total Young Carers	% of Bracknell Forest Population (0 – 18)	Variance
5 - 10	24	55%	0.2%	54.8%
11 - 16	20	45%	0.2%	44.8%
Total	44	100%	0.2%	98%

Table (3)

Table (4) below show Children in families referred for Early Help support identified as meeting the Troubled Families qualifying criteria by Age.

Children, by age, supported by EHP meeting Troubled Families qualifying criteria				
Age Groups	No. of Children	% of Total Children	% of Bracknell Forest Population (0 – 18)	Variance
Unborn	3	1%		
0 - 4	85	26%	1%	25%
5 - 10	122	37%	1%	36%
11 - 18	117	36%	1%	35%
Total	327	100%	1%	99%

Table (4)

Referrals to Early Help by Ethnicity (2019-2020)

Table (5) below shows young people receiving targeted youth support by ethnicity, this is not reflective of the overall young people population in Bracknell Forest.

Young People receiving Targeted Youth Support by Ethnicity				
Ethnicity	No. of Young People	% of Total Young People	% of Bracknell Forest Population (0 – 18)	Variance
Asian or British Asian	3	2%	0%	
Black British	4	3%	0%	
Latino	1	1%	0%	
Mixed British	1	1%	0%	
Mixed European	1	1%	0%	
Traveller/Roma	1	1%	0%	
White	17	11%	0%	
White & Asian	1	1%	0%	
White African	3	2%	0%	
White British	113	71%	0%	
White European	1	1%	0%	
Unknown	14	9%	0%	

Table (5)

Table (6) below shows young carers by ethnicity and is not reflective of the overall young people's population in Bracknell Forest

Young Carers by Ethnicity				
Ethnicity	No. of Young Carers	% of Total Young Carers	% of Bracknell Forest Population (0 – 18)	Variance
Asian or Asian British	1	2%	0%	
Information not yet obtained	2	5%	0%	
Traveller of Irish Heritage	3	7%	0%	
White other	1	2%	0%	
White and Black Caribbean	1	2%	0%	
White British	36	82%	0%	
Total	44	100%	0.2%	99.8%

Table (6)

Children in families supported by Early Help meeting Troubled Families qualifying criteria.

Children in families supported by Early Help meeting TF qualifying criteria by Ethnicity				
Ethnicity	No. of Children	% of Total Children	% of Bracknell Forest Population (0 – 18)	Variance
02 – Asian or Asian British – Indian	1	0.3%	0%	
03 – Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	3	0.9%	0%	
04 – Asian or Asian British – any other Asian Background	2	0.6%	0%	
05 – Black or Black British – African	11	3.4%	0%	
09 – Mixed – White and Asian	10	3.1%	0%	
10 – Mixed – White and Black African	2	0.6%	0%	
11 – Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	0.3%	0%	
12 – Mixed – any other Mixed background	4	1.2%	0%	
13 – White – British	258	78.9%	1%	99%
14 – White – Irish	2	0.6%	0%	
15 – White – any other White Background	14	4.3%	0%	
17 – Not known/not provided	19	5.8%	0%	
Total	327	100%	2%	98%

Table (7)

Referrals to Early Help by Sex (2019-2020)

Table (8) below details the sex of all young carers at the point of assessment. This is not reflective of BF young people population and is significantly weighed to females which may give an indication that where there is a young female in the family there is a higher expectation that young carer duties will be undertaken.

Young Carer Assessments by Sex				
Sex	No. of Young Carers	% Total Young Carers	% of Bracknell Forest Population (0 – 18)	Variance
Female	28	64%	0%	100%
Male	16	36%	0%	100%
Total	44	100%	0%	100%

Table (8)

Table (9) below shows the breakdown by sex of children being supported by early help who meet the Troubled Families Criteria

Children in families supported by Early Help meeting TF qualifying criteria by Sex				
Sex	No. of Children	% of Total Children	% of Bracknell Forest Population (0 – 18)	Variance
Female	143	44%	1%	99%
Male	184	56%	1%	99%
Total	327	100%	2%	98%

Table (9)

19 requests were made (year to date) for the interpreter service, all were approved.

Table 10 shows the ethnicity of children who are electively home educated

Children categorised as being Elective Home Education by Ethnicity				
Ethnicity	No. of Children	% of Total Children	% of Bracknell Forest Population (0 – 18)	Variance
02 – Asian or Asian British – Indian	2	2%	0%	98%
03 – Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	1	1%	0%	99%
04 – Asian or Asian British – any other Asian Background	0	0%	0%	
05 – Black or Black British – African	3	2%	0%	98%
09 – Mixed – White and Asian	5	5%	0%	95%
10 – Mixed – White and Black African	0	0%	0%	
11 – Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	3	2%	0%	98%
12 – Mixed – any other Mixed background	2	2%	0%	98%
13 – White – British	71	58%	0%	42%
14 – White – Irish	1	1%	0%	99%
15 – White – any other White Background	8	6%	0%	94%
17 – Not known/not provided	27	22%	0%	78%
Total	123	100%		

Table (10)

Table 11 shows the ethnicity of the children who are categorised as Children Missing Education

Children who are categorised as Children Missing Education				
Ethnicity	No. of Children	% of Total Children	% of Bracknell Forest Population (0 – 18)	Variance
02 – Asian or Asian British – Indian	15	22%	0%	
03 – Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	5	7%	0%	
04 – Asian or Asian British – any other Asian Background	0	0%	0%	
05 – Black or Black British – African	3	4%	0%	
09 – Mixed – White and Asian	0	0%	0%	
10 – Mixed – White and Black African	0	0%	0%	
11 – Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0%	0%	
12 – Mixed – any other Mixed background	0	0%	0%	
13 – White – British	32	48%	0%	
14 – White – Irish	0	0%	0%	
15 – White – any other White Background	6	9%	0%	
17 – Not known/not provided	1	1%	0%	
Total	67			

Table (11)

Equality Duty

The equality duty is a general duty on public bodies and others that carry out public functions. It ensures that public bodies consider the needs of all individuals in their day to day work in shaping policy, in delivering services, and in relation to their own employees. The council has a general duty under the Equality Act to pay due regard to three key equality objectives:

Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation

Since April 2020 the early help service has introduced service timescales, one of which is the average number of working days from receipt of the referral into the service to the day an allocation decision has been made by the early help duty manager. This ensures that all referrals are processed in the same manner and reporting against this target is part of the developing early help performance scorecard. As part of the service's data reporting a revised set of closure outcomes is being devised and going forward this will enable us to attribute outcomes by age, sex and ethnicity and identify trends of note.

There is a generic corporate requirement that all new staff complete online Equality and Diversity training and there is a mandated requirement that all staff complete Unconscious Bias training by April 2021.

Early Help allocates funds where financial need has been assessed to enable parents/carers to attend programmes identified as a benefit to them and the family. This includes transport and childcare costs and limits some of the barriers imposed on low income families. In addition, access to interpreter services where English is not the first language has increased

Early Help collects Special Category Data and Personal Identifiable Information as part of its processes, and this is managed with the Information Governance Lawyer via the DPIA data processing system. This ensures that all data is processed safely and fairly and supported by a legal framework.

Advance equality of opportunity between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not

The transition from children centres to the family hub model, whilst retaining a community offer for under 5s is key to the ongoing development of early help and within this a broader bespoke offer for families and young people. A recent and on-going review of early help performance data identified the absence of tracking the source of referral by agency/other organisations. This data is now being collated and will enable the service to more readily identify where referrals do not correlate with perceived areas of need and vulnerability both in terms of services supporting vulnerable clients, for example, community mental health services as well as parts of the Bracknell Forest community who are not representative in ethnicity data.

As part of its equality monitoring approach early help will focus on 4 areas of activity:

1. Service user access

2. Take up of early help services
3. Service quality
4. Service user satisfaction

Service user access

Access to the early help service through children's services has been detailed above, however accessibility to early help should not be solely measured by this route. Access includes transport networks to the family hubs and the coverage of early help information being made available in accessible formats, including British Sign Language. In response, the service has developed a communications plan for 2020-21 which includes re-branding and updating its social media platforms, ensuring a broad range of universal, parenting and emotional well-being services are detailed with clear access routes laid out. The communication plan will also identify and promote annual different cultural and religious celebrations that occur during the year.

Take up of early help services

The service will consider the following:

- Of those people for whom our service is designed, how many are from different backgrounds (e.g. sex, BAME, disabled etc)?
- Of those who use our service, how many are from these different groups?
- What is the difference between these figures and how can we respond to that difference?

Service quality

Progress is already under way across the service to improve the quality of interventions and be able to evidence that improvement from the point of entry to case closure. The incremental implementation of service timescales and an evolving effective duty system have been part of this process. The service's quality assurance framework 'Learning together, Growing together' references equality and diversity and key benchmarks. Case audits and practice observations will enable the service to build a more coherent picture as to whether an equitable service is delivered and where a difference in service quality is noticed that there is a reasonable and justified reason for the difference.

Service user satisfaction

Although informally collected this is already been identified as area where notable development is required to enable analysis of each equality group. Our feedback formats will need to be accessible, reflective of age and in a way that can be understood by all. In inform service improvement, consideration must be given to the:

- views expressed by service users and whether they are largely the same irrespective of background and/or protective characteristics or
- are some service users more or less satisfied with particular aspects of the service?

Compliments and complaints will be added to the Early Help Performance Reporting Scorecard for 2020 -21.

Conclusion

Equality monitoring is essential to mainstreaming equalities into service delivery planning, accessibility and quality assurance benchmarking. The improvement journey of early help as set out in its Service Improvement Plan, Quality Assurance Framework and Communications Plan acknowledges the golden thread of equality and diversity in all its policies, practices and procedures. Although embryonic, the early help performance scorecard is evolving in the breadth of detail it is collating regarding services and families accessing early help. Combined these will give us a better foundation to undertake an analysis of the effectiveness, fairness and equitable level of service that is being provided to all communities in Bracknell Forest. For the period April 2020 – March 2021 an appraisal objective has been set for all staff, including managers to ensure the services and activities we deliver are inclusive and value diversity and that through our increased understanding of the barriers faced by our service users we improve their accessibility to services. This objective is to encourage a broader approach to the interventions being offered and for front line practitioners to consciously take into account individuals' learning styles, special education needs (where these exist) and the impact of adverse childhood experiences.