

Equalities Monitoring – Services

E - Early Help

Annual Report - 2020-21



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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 and independence

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 the service must be flexible and responsive to the changing needs and trends of the communities it supports.

The council's multi-disciplinary Early Help service is primarily located across four family hubs, 2 in the south of the borough (The Rowans and the Alders) and 2 in the north (The Oaks and the 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 whole family working, evidenced-based parenting and domestic abuse programmes, early years, youth work and education welfare, including children missing education and Elective Home Education. Alongside which, health visitors and the community midwifery team are co-located to provide universal antenatal and postnatal services. In addition, the Getting Help Team, employed by Berkshire Health Care Trust, provides a tier 2 mental health and well-being service across the family hub arrangement. The service's Young Carers Team works

with schools and a number of other agencies in the identification and assessment of young carers to ensure their needs and those they care for are understood and responded to.

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 is limited parenting capacity.

Access to the council's Early Help service is primarily through a referral to children's services front door, known as the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), whereupon the information provided in the referral will determine which service is best suited to meet the needs identified in the referral. If the decision is that a targeted early help service is required, the referral is forwarded to the council's Early Help service (as described above) via their duty system. The decision made by the Front Door is based on Bracknell Forest's continuum of need². Referrals to the council's early help service are received from a wide range of services and can include self-referrals. Early help is a consent-based service and 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.

Some families supported by the service will have been identified as having at least 2 of the following characteristics which are aligned to the national Supporting 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 of the referral and depending on the support required, an assessment maybe undertaken in partnership with the family and/or young person. During 2021 the service adopted the Family Outcome Star and the My Star assessment, which considers, in collaboration with the family and young person, different aspects of the young person's and/or family's life and includes relationships, financial stability, emotional and physical needs, and social and community networks. The outcome of the assessment will determine the intensity and duration of support required, both of which are reviewed during the intervention using a Team Around the Family/Child approach.

Referrals to Early Help by Age, Ethnicity & Sex (2020-2021)

Referrals by age between April 2020 and March 2021

Table (1) below shows the number of children by age, at the time of referral, being supported by an Early Help Practitioner. A single family may have multiple children within the same age group range or spread across the age range groups. The service, through its diverse range of skills has the ability to support children and young people from 0-19 years.

Children, by Age at time of referral, supported by an Early Help Practitioner				
Age Group	No. of Children	% of Total Children	% of Bracknell Forest Population (0 – 18)	Variance +/- On 2019-2020 figures
0 – 4	212	25%	24%	+59%
5 – 10	321	37%	33%	+66%
11 – 18	330	38%	43%	+63%
Total	863	100%	100%	+63%

Table (1)

Table (2) below shows the number of young people by age, at the time of referral, receiving targeted youth support, with the age range 10 -15 years being the highest cohort and 12% higher than the Bracknell Forest population for that age range. This age range encompasses supporting transition to secondary school and in the latter school years, examination concerns. 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 at time of referral, supported by an Early Help Youth Practitioner				
Age Group	No. of Children	% of Total Children	% of Bracknell Forest Population (10 – 18)	Variance +/- On 2019-2020 figures
10 - 15	133	77%	69%	+16%

16 - 18	40	23%	31%	-11%
Total	173	100%	100%	+8%

Table (2)

Table (3) below shows the number of Young Carers by age, at the point a Young Carers assessment is being undertaken. Encouragingly, the service has seen a significant increase in the number of young carers being assessed and registered which reflects the council's messaging with partners in promoting identification and support of young carers. As would be expected there is an over-representation of older children aged 11-16 years. The young carers team works closely with families, schools, and other networks to support this cohort of young people and in early 2022 a new young carers group (age appropriate) is to be established at the Braccan Walk Town Centre Youth Hub.

Young Carers, by Age at point of Assessment as of March 2021				
Age (years)	No. of Young Carers	% of Total Young Carers	% of Bracknell Forest Population (0- 18)	Variance N/A
0 – 4	1	0.45%	24%	
5 – 10	28	12.56%	33%	
11 - 16	136	60.99%	33%	
17	25	11.21%	5%	
18	33	14.80%	5%	
Total	223	100%	100%	

Table (3) (To note, variance, this is not applicable due to difference in breakdown between the two years)

Table (4) below shows the number of children in families referred for Early Help support identified as meeting the national Supporting Families criteria by age, at the start of intervention. The Supporting Families programme supports families where there is or has been recent domestic abuse, poor school attendance, adult or youth offending, financial hardship and/or worklessness and physical and mental health. A significant rise in the *Unborn category* is shown, which may be a trend that requires additional analysis to investigate this significant rise. This type of analysis would provide a more detailed insight to the needs and context of this age group. To note, both the 0-4 years and 5-11 years cohorts are reflective of the Bracknell Forest population, suggesting that awareness of the Early Help service is well understood by schools and our partners.

Children in families referred to Early Help meeting Supporting Families criteria, by Age at start of intervention				
Age Groups	No. of Children	% of Total Children	% of Bracknell Forest Population (0-18)	Variance +/- On 2019-2020 figures
Unborn	25	6%		+733%

0 - 4	96	24%	24%	+13%
5 - 10	134	33%	33%	+10%
11 - 18	149	37%	43%	+27%
Total	404	100%	100%	+24%

Table (4)

Referrals by Ethnicity between April 2020 and March 2021

Table (5) below shows the number of children, by Ethnicity, who meet the Supporting Families criteria between April 2020 and March 2021. The table shows over-representation for Black and Minority Ethnicities compared to the overall Bracknell Forest population. The service provides access to translation support where this is required, and interventions are expected to consider and reflect an individual's and family culture throughout its duration. It is a positive that the service is receiving referrals from all sections of the community. The service is developing a suite of reports that will provide additional ethnicity information on all referrals received into service.

Note:

Children supported by an Early Help Practitioner by Ethnicity not available as data currently only held per family. A family may consist of multiple ethnicities. Variance cannot be shown, due to difference in categorisation criteria between the two respective years.

Children in families supported by Early Help meeting Supporting Families criteria by Ethnicity				
Ethnicity	No. of Children	% of Total Children	% of Bracknell Forest Population	Variance
White: English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	266	66%	84.9%	
White: Irish	0	0%	0.9%	
White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller	0	0%	0.1%	
White: Other White	21	5%	4.7%	
Mixed/multiple ethnic group: White and Black Caribbean	11	3%	0.6%	
Mixed/multiple ethnic group: White and Black African	11	3%	0.3%	
Mixed/multiple ethnic group: White and Asian	7	2%	0.7%	
Mixed/multiple ethnic group: Other Mixed	4	1%	0.5%	
Asian/Asian British: Indian	0	0%	1.8%	
Asian/Asian British: Pakistani	0	0%	0.5%	
Asian/Asian British: Bangladeshi	2	0%	0.1%	
Asian/Asian British: Chinese	0	0%	0.5%	

Asian/Asian British: Other Asian	9	2%	2.2%	
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: African	20	5%	1.4%	
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: Caribbean	2	0%	0.4%	
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: Other Black	6	1%	0.2%	
Other ethnic group: Arab	0	0%	0.2%	
Other ethnic group: Any other ethnic group	4	1%	0.3%	
Not known/not provided	41	10%		
Total	404	100%	100%	

Table (5)

Table (6) below shows the number of adults, by Ethnicity, who meet the Supporting Families criteria between April 2020 and March 2021. During 2021-2022, focus will be improving the service's understanding of the not known/not provided category, which also includes where providing an ethnicity has been declined by the service user.

Adults in families supported by Early Help meeting Supporting Families qualifying criteria by Ethnicity				
Ethnicity	No. of Adults	% of Total Adults	% of Bracknell Forest Population	Variance
White: English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	169	48%	84.9%	
White: Irish	1	0%	0.9%	
White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller	0	0%	0.1%	
White: Other White	23	7%	4.7%	
Mixed/multiple ethnic group: White and Black Caribbean	2	1%	0.6%	
Mixed/multiple ethnic group: White and Black African	2	1%	0.3%	
Mixed/multiple ethnic group: White and Asian	1	0%	0.7%	
Mixed/multiple ethnic group: Other Mixed	1	0%	0.5%	
Asian/Asian British: Indian	0	0%	1.8%	
Asian/Asian British: Pakistani	0	0%	0.5%	
Asian/Asian British: Bangladeshi	2	1%	0.1%	
Asian/Asian British: Chinese	0	0%	0.5%	
Asian/Asian British: Other Asian	9	3%	2.2%	
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: African	4	1%	1.4%	
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: Caribbean	2	1%	0.4%	
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: Other Black	5	1%	0.2%	
Other ethnic group: Arab	0	0%	0.2%	

Other ethnic group: Any other ethnic group	7	2%	0.3%	
Not known/not provided	123	35%		
Total	351	100%	100%	

Table (6)

Table (7) below shows the number of young people, by Ethnicity, supported by Early Help Youth Service between April 2020 and March 2021 and shows an over representation against the 'Mixed/multiple ethnic group' and 'Black/African/ Caribbean/Black British' group. Whilst access to the youth service is via a referral pathway, the individual needs of a young person are considered from the outset of the support provided and the young person's voice central to the support provided.

Young People supported by Early Help Youth Service by Ethnicity				
Ethnicity	No. of Young People	% of Total Young People	% of Bracknell Forest Population 0-19	Variance
White: English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	107	62%	84.9%	
White: Irish	1	1%	0.9%	
White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller	0	0%	0.1%	
White: Other White	35	20%	4.7%	
Mixed/multiple ethnic group: White and Black Caribbean	1	1%	0.6%	
Mixed/multiple ethnic group: White and Black African	1	1%	0.3%	
Mixed/multiple ethnic group: White and Asian	1	1%	0.7%	
Mixed/multiple ethnic group: Other Mixed	8	5%	0.5%	
Asian/Asian British: Indian	0	0%	1.8%	
Asian/Asian British: Pakistani	0	0%	0.5%	
Asian/Asian British: Bangladeshi	0	0%	0.1%	
Asian/Asian British: Chinese	0	0%	0.5%	
Asian/Asian British: Other Asian	4	2%	2.2%	
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: African	1	1%	1.4%	
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: Caribbean	0	0%	0.4%	
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: Other Black	4	2%	0.2%	
Other ethnic group: Arab	0	0%	0.2%	
Other ethnic group: Any other ethnic group	1	1%	0.3%	
Not known/not provided	9	5%		
Total	173	100%	100%	

Table (7)

Table (8) below shows young carers by Ethnicity and reflects an over-representation of the Gypsy Roma Traveller population and Other Mixed Ethnic group. During 2020 -21 the work of the young carers team has been promoting the identification of young carers and it is a positive that the service is receiving referrals that identifies young carers from all sections of the community.

Young Carers by Ethnicity				
Ethnicity	No. of Young Carers	% of Total Young Carers	% of Bracknell Forest Population	Variance
White: English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	128	83.7%	84.9%	
White: Irish	2	1.3%	0.9%	
White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller	3	2.0%	0.1%	
White: Other White	1	0.7%	4.7%	
Mixed/multiple ethnic group: White and Black Caribbean	2	1.3%	0.6%	
Mixed/multiple ethnic group: White and Black African	0	0.0%	0.3%	
Mixed/multiple ethnic group: White and Asian	1	0.7%	0.7%	
Mixed/multiple ethnic group: Other Mixed	4	2.6%	0.5%	
Asian/Asian British: Indian	0	0.0%	1.8%	
Asian/Asian British: Pakistani	0	0.0%	0.5%	
Asian/Asian British: Bangladeshi	0	0.0%	0.1%	
Asian/Asian British: Chinese	0	0.0%	0.5%	
Asian/Asian British: Other Asian	1	0.7%	2.2%	
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: African	0	0.0%	1.4%	
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: Caribbean	0	0.0%	0.4%	
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: Other Black	5	3.3%	0.2%	
Other ethnic group: Arab	0	0.0%	0.2%	
Other ethnic group: Any other ethnic group	0	0.0%	0.3%	
Not known/not provided	6	3.9%		
Total	153	100%	100%	

Table (8)

Referrals to Early Help by Sex and Disability (2020-2021)

Table (9) below details the sex of all young carers at the point of assessment.

Note:

- Children supported by an Early Help Practitioner by Gender not available as data currently only held per family.
- Young people supported by an Early Help Youth Practitioner by Gender not available as data currently recorded.

Young Carers by Sex April 2020 – March 2021				
Sex	No. of Young Carers	% of Total Young Carers	% of Bracknell Forest Population (0- 18)	Variance +/- On 2019-2020 figures
Female	93	61%	48%	+275%
Male	60	39%	52%	+232%
Total	153	100%	100%	+248%

Table (9)

There has been a significant increase in the number of recorded young carers and of those young carers, they are weighted towards males over females, which is a reversal of the trend in the previous year 2019 – 2020.

Table (10) below shows the breakdown by sex of children being supported by Early Help who meet the Supporting Families criteria.

Children in families referred to Early Help meeting Supporting Families criteria by Sex				
Sex	No. of Children	% of Total Children	% of Bracknell Forest Population (0 – 18)	Variance +/- On 2019-2020 figures
Female	184	46%	48%	+29%
Male	206	51%	52%	+12%
Unknown	14	3%		
Total	404	100%	100%	+24%

Table (10)

Table (11) below shows the breakdown by sex of adults being supported by Early Help who meet the Supporting Families criteria, which illustrates an over representation of females. One of the service's aims for 2021-2022 is to improve its reach and engagement with fathers across its universal and targeted provision, in particular where fathers are living outside of the main family residence.

Adults in families referred to Early Help meeting Supporting Families criteria by Sex				
Sex	No. of Adults	% of Total Adults	% of Bracknell Forest Population (18+)	Variance N/A

Female	217	62%	51%	
Male	134	38%	49%	
Total	351	100%	100%	

Table (11) NB: No comparable figures available for variance calculation to be completed.

Table (12) shows the breakdown by Disability of Young Carers as of March 2021. Historically information was not obtained with regard to disabilities of young carers, this is now included as part of the young carers assessments as reviews are undertaken this information is being routinely recorded.

Young Carers by Disability March 2021				
Disability	No. of Young Carers	% of Total Young Carers	% of Bracknell Forest Population (0- 18)	Variance N/A
Yes	34	15.25%		
No	77	34.53%		
Unknown	112	50.22%		
Total	223	100%		

Table (12) NB No comparable figures available for variance calculation to be completed.

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

The service operates several standards linked to timeliness, 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 referenced in the service's performance scorecard.

There is a generic corporate requirement that all new staff complete online Equality and Diversity training and during 2021 there was a mandated requirement that all staff complete Unconscious Bias training, this has been accomplished.

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, there is access to interpreter services for those individuals where English is not their first language.

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 Data Protection Impact Assessment 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 aged 0-19 years. During 2021 the service has made significant progress in the way it records, tracks and collates data and whilst this work continues it enables the service to obtain an improved understanding of the communities we are supporting, the services that are being provided and the agencies making referrals on behalf of families and young people. More broadly work is in progress to develop the data maturity of Bracknell Forest's Early Help partnership to provide a more comprehensive overview and understanding of early help services in the community and the impact they have on improving outcomes for families, children and young people.

As part of its equality monitoring approach the Early Help service will continue its 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 council's Early Help service is through the MASH however, accessibility to the service 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. The service has begun to review its digital and social media profile to strengthen and promote its online presence and ensure that it secures the best possible reach in the community about the services it provides. The service recently did a presentation to a significant number of GPs detailing the type of parenting programmes available and how to access the service more broadly. The service, through its Youth Team has also responded to the voice of young people and established a new LGBTQ+ youth group. Taking a co-production approach this group seeks to extend its reach in the Bracknell Forest community.

Take up of Early Help services

Over the coming year the service will consider where there is over or under representation of cohorts with protected characteristics and will seek to understand why this is so and how we can respond to that difference where relevant. The service is also looking at capturing data to allow monitoring by other protected characteristics. Finally, development of service user

feedback mechanisms and the ability to aggregate and report this information in more meaningful ways will also allow equalities analysis.

Service quality

The service's quality assurance framework 'Learning together, Growing together' references equality and diversity and key benchmarks. Case audits and practice observations 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

The service has developed several service user feedback tools, including formats for telephone conversations with families and young people, text formatted messages and for young children using visual images reflective of age. During 2021 and 2022 the service will be focussing on improving the level of service user feedback it obtains at various points during an intervention and within that whether the service is giving due consideration to:

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

Compliments and complaints form part of the Early Help performance reporting.

Conclusion

Equality monitoring is essential to mainstreaming equalities into service delivery planning, accessibility, and quality assurance benchmarking. The continuing development of the council's Early Help service through its quality assurance framework and annual development plan acknowledges the golden thread of equality and diversity in all its policies, practices, and procedures. In addition, the Early Help performance reporting is evolving in the breadth of detail it is collating regarding services and families accessing Early Help. Data consistency across the varying yearly reports will also be reviewed and developed over time. Combined, these will give us a better foundation to analyse the effectiveness, fairness and equitable level of service that is being provided to all communities in Bracknell Forest. For the period April 2021 – March 2022 the appraisal objective has been retained 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 consider individuals' learning styles, special education needs (where these exist) and the impact of adverse childhood experiences.