

# Early Years Help

## 1. The Proposal and Activities Undertaken

We used the £1500 funding to pilot creative ways of bringing together community groups in a digital and virtual way to be fully involved in the development and roll out of our new model for Early Help in Torbay.

The involvement of community groups is critical to the success of the new partnership Early Help model, but we recognise that many have little capacity to be attending meetings and that this can compromise opportunities to engage them. Our intention was to remove these barriers to engagement and embrace the new digital ways of working that have been so successful during COVID 19.

We are now engaging with community groups who will form a part of our Early Help Hub Network. These are venues embedded in the community who engage with real people in communities within a safe space which they engage with because of them being a community venue, for example a café, food bank or community centre (as examples), but can then enter conversations about their needs. We are now working with these organisations to draw them into an overall Hub Network, supported by a Quality Assurance Framework which ensures that some key elements are covered, such as Child Protection Policies and the team being trained in safeguarding. Crucially, however, one of the quality standards will be that these venues are part of our Locality Networks, the purpose of which is to increase people's knowledge of the services that are out there to support the people with whom they are working. This is a key addition to what these venues are already delivering, as currently they recognise that they "only know what they know". Without the £1.5k to support digital engagement, we would not be able to offer this key "added value" to these services e.g. helping them to make even better connections, and would not have connected to them so easily during the pandemic to move us to the stage that we are at.

Ultimately, this work is promoting early help and prevention at a very local community level, reducing the escalation of problems that can lead to family breakdown and children and young people being taken into care.

## 2. Progress

Our activities included the facilitation of online workshops including break out and interactive activities. Three induction workshops took place in May, one per locality, followed by the first of the Locality Network meetings in July and then September (one each in each of the 3 localities in both July and September).

The Locality Network meetings have brought partners together virtually across a range of sectors, developing relationships, building knowledge and services, and engaging on the development of specific areas of the model. We have also invested time and resource into developing a platform to show on a visual map all of the services which are involved in our networks, what they do and where they operate. We are currently engaging with 80+ organisations through this method.

Going forward, it is helping to support an analysis of how we build a hybrid model where virtual technology complements in person meetings.

Furthermore, we have been able to begin to resource the development of an online visual map of services which identifies who is who in the networks and where they work. This will provide members with an at a glance view of other partners and support in making better connections and relationships.

As stated above, the digital approach to engagement has enabled us to engage with organisations who will become members of our Early Help Hub Networks, within a QA Framework that ensures consistency and safety of practice. The funding has enabled us to reach these organisations more readily during the pandemic when on the ground engagement has been more difficult.

### **3. Outcomes**

To date we have had up to 120 attendees across the three localities attend the Early Help Model Induction and Locality Networks, representing 80/90 organisations. This reach would not have been possible without the support of our VCS partners who have provided additional resource to support VCS organisations in particular to engage.

We have built on the success of this new virtual way of working to develop our Early Help Assessment Training which has been fully booked for its initial settings

Partners are reporting how much they value the Networks in helping them make connections with services that they did not know about previously. This is achieved through ensuring that we have a quest speaker at every Network meeting to promote a service which can be referred to, and distributing key service information on a regular basis to partners outside of the meeting

We have also begun to develop an online digital map of services involved in the Networks, to further help improve people's knowledge of services and make connections.

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more readily during the pandemic when on the ground engagement has been more difficult. These Hubs provide direct support to people in the community, and our “added value” to them is to support them, through the virtual Locality Networks, to be even better connected and informed to meet the range of needs with which they are presented.

Key outcomes that we believe we are beginning to achieve include:

- A collective vision and aspiration for Early Help
- An acknowledgement that Early Help is everyone’s business and an understanding of the role that each plays
- An improvement in the knowledge of services across partners, to help them make even better connections to address the needs presented to them by the community
- An improved connection between services, with tangible examples of people accessing services which they didn’t know of before

#### **4. Alignment to Co-operative Principles and Values**

Our work supports the following CCIN Principles and Values:

- **Social Partnership:** Through strengthening relationships with partners who work in their communities, based on a shared sense of responsibility for wellbeing and mutual benefit.
- **Co-Production:** Through our work with partners, a key strand is how to develop systems that enable citizens to be equal partners in designing and commissioning public services and in determining the use of public resources. We have co-produced our Early Help Hub Model with communities, and this has been made easier in a virtual way during the pandemic
- **Social Value:** Our framework for Early Help, and our Early Help Hub Model, delivered via our partners, gives partners the tool to make a real difference in their communities and achieve better local social and economic outcomes
- **Innovation:** Improving connections between partners has enabled us to develop innovative projects such as the Torbay Promise and our Early Help Hub Model.

#### **5. Conclusions**

We have successfully commenced our new approach to Early Help in Torbay through bringing together a wide range of partners in a virtual way, to induct on the new model, deliver the first of the operational Locality Network meetings, and to train in the new process for Early Help Assessment.

We have been successful in drawing in partners who were not as connected as they wish to be, and help make connections to services for people that had not been made before.

Working closely with the local VCS umbrella organisation has enabled them to use some additional capacity to engage and support VCS partners, and these are critical to our success in empowering any organisation within the community to feel engaged, valued and supported to deliver Early Help.

We have been able to accelerate our approach to our Early Help Hub Model, being able to develop the relationships which underpin these because of the capacity to do this virtually.

The next steps for us now are to understand how we continue to get the benefits of online engagement with that of face-to-face opportunities, and in continuing to build the online service map, and further development of our Early Help Hub model.

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