

## Report to Cabinet

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<b>Title:</b>	<b>Early Help Review</b>
<b>Date:</b>	10 July 2017
<b>Date can be implemented:</b>	18 July 2017
<b>Author:</b>	Cabinet Member for Children's Services
<b>Contact officer:</b>	Carol Douch
<b>Local members affected:</b>	All Members

*For media enquiries concerning this report, please contact the press office on 01296 382444.*

### Summary

We want to provide support to children and families who are most in need of our help, quickly and in the right way. There are many families who get support from a number of organisations to help with problems they are facing, but this support isn't always coordinated in a way that makes sense to the family. This causes confusion and frustration for the family and it doesn't always enable things to improve quickly enough, or for those improvements to be sustained.

There is a need to focus our resources on those who need our help the most. This may require changes to how we identify and interact with families in need in our communities. To achieve this, consultation with families, stakeholders and our staff about a new model of delivery will inform how we work in the future with families in need. The proposal we are consulting on aims to bring together all the people who work with families when problems are emerging, by creating one service: the Early Help service. In future we will integrate services and organisations working with families, to ensure help is timely and effective.

### Recommendations

**That Cabinet agrees to consult formally with the public, key stakeholders and with staff on the best way to provide the right support at the right time for children and their families, to ensure that they are able to make positive changes and to contribution to their community and do not require long term statutory intervention.**



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



The proposed model being consulted on proposes that there is a new Early Help service across the county providing whole family support, dealing with all the issues a family faces, with their full involvement and consent. This service would be delivered through lead family workers based in community settings.

## **A. Narrative setting out the reasons for the decision**

### **Strategic Context**

1. The Strategic Plan Vision for Buckinghamshire is that:

*Residents will take greater responsibility for meeting their own needs, and those of their families and their communities. Aspiration, rather than dependency, will be valued, and everyone will play their part in the success of the County. Within this context, the Councils' resources will be focused on enabling the conditions in which our communities can prosper. Working with our partners, we will continue to find new and innovative ways of securing services so that we deliver value for all residents in the County.*

2. We want all children and families in Buckinghamshire to be happy, healthy, safe and achieve their full potential. The Council's Change for Children programme has been established to improve and redesign services for children and young people, learning from best practice across the country to develop the right way for Buckinghamshire. The Early Help Strategy is one of the work strands of this programme. It aims to:

- make sure children and families in Buckinghamshire get the right support at the right time
- help children and families be independent and build their own resilience so when problems occur they can find their own solutions at the earliest point of difficulty
- ensure that children and families only have to tell their story once, by working closely with our colleagues and partners to identify and meet their needs together

### **Early Help - The current position**

3. 'Early Help' is an umbrella term for a range of services, programmes or interventions which share an underlying rationale: to provide support to tackle problems before they become more difficult to reverse and thereby maximise the chances of happy, safe and fulfilling lives for families in the community'<sup>1</sup>. In financial terms, the hypothesis is that early help will prevent the needs of some families from escalating to more expensive statutory services (e.g. social care, criminal or family justice).

4. A number of County Council services provide some form of early help and have therefore been included within the scope of the Early Help review.

5. Delivery of these services is through a mixture of in-house and commissioned delivery models. A number of the services have a statutory basis.

6. In August 2014, Ofsted noted that there were a wide range of Early Help services across Buckinghamshire but they were insufficiently co-ordinated. Since then, there has been substantial improvement in the co-ordination of services for the most vulnerable children and families (for example through the establishment of multi-agency Early Help Panels).

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<sup>1</sup> [www.eif.org.uk/what-is-early-intervention](http://www.eif.org.uk/what-is-early-intervention)

However, this now needs to go further, to reach those children earlier, when problems first start to emerge for the child and their family.

### **The case for change**

7. There has been a substantial increase in demand for Children's social care statutory services over the last 5 years, above the increase in population growth. This demand is projected to continue to rise. The reasons for this are complex, but include demographic changes and pressures, reductions in universal services provided by the Council and other partners and anxiety experienced by front line practitioners about perceived risk to children. This means that more children and their families are already having and will increasingly have intrusive, often unwelcome and costly statutory intervention. Detailed research and needs analysis has been carried out as part of the background to this strategy, with the summary findings indicating that demand for statutory services is driven by the following factors impacting on a family and children living within that family:
  - Domestic abuse
  - Behavioural problems
  - Mental health
  - Relationship breakdown
  - Poverty and worklessness
8. Problems for children commonly appear in the early years and in adolescence, and it is the **combination** of problems which has most impact on children.
9. Currently most Early Help services are focused on a particular age group, a single issue or one approach. Feedback from children and families as well as local and national research has consistently shown that this is not the best approach to improve outcomes and build resilience. Problems within a family invariably link together and impact across the family. For example, parental mental health issues are likely to impact on their employability but also on the attendance, behaviour and attainment of their children in school. Similarly, one child's serious or long term disability brings both mental and financial pressures onto the whole family, while domestic abuse or relationship problems are proven to have serious consequences for the long term outcomes of children. So tackling one problem or one individual is less likely to be effective than dealing with everything that is going on for the family as a whole.
10. Many of the individual services currently delivered are highly valued by their users. However, in many cases the user base is too narrow, and there is strong evidence that overall the right children and families are not receiving the right help, early enough to make a difference. Open access or poorly targeted services are not well used by those who need them most. Waiting for people who are in real need to navigate the system and ask for help means that we are not reaching the right people. Analysis of current Children Centre service users by ACORN group shows that a disproportionate group (43%) fall within the more affluent categories (1 & 2); with only 29% falling within the bottom disadvantaged categories (4 & 5).
11. The existing services overlap with each other, and each service has its own approach, methodology, processes and systems. This is confusing for children and families, and for

key partners such as schools who wish to refer families. There is no system to check whether families are receiving more than one type of support and so it is impossible to state accurately how many children and families already benefit from the provision overall. It is also virtually impossible to measure outcomes or success for children and families across services, or to compare their efficiency and effectiveness. This is compounded by the fact that it is very hard to prove the effectiveness of any specific preventative service, as positive outcomes may be due to a number of factors or range of interventions and typically there is poorer data collection and monitoring than applies in statutory services.

12. National policy is moving to a more co-ordinated approach to problem solving and service delivery to ensure a better use of public assets. Many other local authorities have already taken decisions to streamline and co-ordinate Early Help services to be more effective for users, better value for money for residents and more sustainable in the long term. There is increasing evidence that this approach is producing better outcomes and reductions on statutory services. The main finding in the current research is that strong political and cross partnership leadership is essential for the successful implementation of any new approaches.

### **Designing a new model**

13. In developing a proposed solution for Buckinghamshire, the team reviewed national research, together with insight from over 20 other local authorities about best practice. Key messages include:

- It is most effective to target help where there is more likely to be higher risk (evidence is strongest for programmes that target based on early signals of risk e.g. child behaviour problems, insecure attachment, delayed development of speech)
- Focusing on dealing with root causes rather than symptoms will produce better results
- Most effective interventions are preventative instead of reactive
- Whole family approach is important to long term sustainability
- Reconfiguring staff and resources to build a new Early Help service, supporting whole family work, is more effective than a number of different services working separately.

14. A considerable amount of service user, staff and stakeholder engagement has been carried out since November 2016 to help inform the design of the model:

#### **Respondents expressed what they felt currently doesn't work:**

- Having to deal with a range of disconnected services
- Being given the wrong information
- Not knowing where to go for help
- Lack of accountability i.e. services not following up on a complaint
- Feeling misunderstood or judged

#### **Respondents expressed what they prefer:**

- Feeling listened to and understood and being treated with respect
- One consistent key worker

- Being able to get support/information for more than one thing
- Being able to get support for more than one member of the family and having the whole family's needs considered
- Being able to access information, advice and support through a number of different methods of access (web, leaflets, 1 to 1, etc.)
- Workers being easily accessible both in terms of venue (home or local community) and by the key worker being available on the end of a phone
- Being flexible in approach, taking into account individual circumstances and giving practical tailored advice and support
- Keeping the service user informed every step of the way.

15. Demand for Early Help is not evenly spread across the county, with more than 50% being in either High Wycombe or Aylesbury, but with significant demand spread across other towns, particularly Chesham. However, demand for Early Help services is not confined to towns and there is considerable need in more rural areas. Demand has shifted as the demography of the county changes and this is likely to continue. Whatever the future, the best way forward will be to have a model that has the advantage of geographical flexibility.

### **The proposed Early Help model**

16. It is proposed that there should be a new Early Help service across the county providing whole family support, dealing with all the issues a family faces, with their involvement and consent. The new model would be formed by remodelling the current service provision.

17. The focus of the new service will be to make real, measurable changes for the children in the family by helping the family as a whole, and to build resilience so that families are better equipped to handle future problems as they arise. These changes or outcomes will be measured on a family basis, but also across the cohort of families involved.

18. The initial proposal is that there would be nine teams of lead family workers, working in community settings across the county. These teams will support families where they are e.g. in their homes, in community and other settings. They will use innovative, creative and very practical techniques and interventions to help families understand where they are (assessment) and where they need to be (outcomes), and develop a clear plan with them to help the families get there. Some of the interventions will be with the whole family, some with individuals and some with targeted groups. The teams will make full use of community resources already available, including volunteers.

19. The needs analysis tells us where we should target help for children and families, but it is also key that the new model provides geographical flexibility to respond to changing demand.

20. The individual skill set of workers will be fully utilised, with a clear intention that every worker will be supported to develop new skills and expertise to deliver whole family work across all the issues families face. A significant staff training plan would be developed to support the implementation of the new model.

21. As part of the development of a new Early Help service, we are already engaging with key partners in Health (including Mental Health services for adults and children), the Criminal Justice System, Education and the Voluntary and Community Sector to work towards further transformational approaches. Much of this work is being co-ordinated through the multi-agency Early Help Strategy Group, which jointly with the Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board develops and delivers the Early Help Strategy.

### **Timescales**

22. It is proposed that the public consultation runs for 10 weeks, alongside staff and stakeholder engagement. The results of the consultation will be presented to Cabinet for a final decision on the Early Help Model in the autumn, with a view to launching the new delivery model in spring 2018.

### **B. Other options available**

23. Four broad options were considered before reaching this recommendation:

- Retain all existing commissioned and in house services in their current configuration, but reduce all budgets by the same proportion
- Retain only those services which are able to evidence effectiveness and outcomes and close others completely
- Retain and reconfigure in house services while ceasing commissioned services
- Develop a new model bringing together a range of staff skills and experience

24. It is recommended that the development of a new model of service will provide the best value for money and the best opportunity to improve outcomes and reduce demand on statutory services. This option, based on emerging best practice, has therefore been developed as the basis for public, stakeholder and staff consultation.

### **C. Resource implications**

25. The Council's overall financial position and plans have led to service areas reviewing their performance against best practice. This has identified Early Help services where a new improved delivery model has the potential to deliver £3.3m of savings included within the Council's financial plans.

### **D. Value For Money (VFM) Self-Assessment**

31. The proposed new model has been introduced in a wide range of local authority areas across England over the last 3 years. Early indications are very positive. A new report is due (July 2017) from the Early Intervention Foundation that aims to evaluate the relative success of this way of working.

32. Whilst there has been no formal benchmarking of success measures to date, there is an increasing consensus that the Troubled Families measures are a valid and evidence based approach, as they address the following key areas of success:

- School attendance rate including exclusions

- Crime and antisocial behaviour
- Worklessness in adults and young people
- Children in need – reducing the demand for statutory services
- Domestic abuse incidence
- Health and wellbeing of children and parents

33. It is therefore recommended that the new model be evaluated against these measures, over time.

#### **E. Legal implications**

34. Legal advice has been sought on a range of issues, including procurement, consultation and TUPE. A full equalities impact assessment has been completed. Any new model will ensure that the statutory duties of the Council will continue to be delivered.

#### **F. Property implications**

35. Under the proposed new model, a significant majority of individual face to face work with children and families will be done through outreach in family homes or in neutral community settings, rather than in buildings run by the Council. This means that specific buildings and their use are not critical to the success of the model.

36. A review of the buildings currently occupied by the teams and services affected is underway and proposals about future use will be developed. . These will be presented as part of the final recommendations in the autumn.

#### **H. Feedback from consultation, Local Area Forums and Local Member views**

37. Member briefings were held in February, May & June 2017.

#### **I. Communication issues**

38. Service user, staff and stakeholder engagement has taken place in order to inform the proposed model. This has taken the form of open access stakeholder, staff and partner workshops (November 2016 – January 2017) and engagement with specific groups of service users over the same period. Additionally, there has been a full analysis of feedback from service users locally and nationally over the last 3 years.

39. Formal consultation now needs to take place on the proposed Early Help model. The intention is to conduct a public consultation that will engage with the users and potential users of all in scope services. It will also seek to engage with those children and families who do not currently access and are not offered these services, but who move straight into statutory services instead, and who therefore may be beneficiaries of the new proposed model. Key stakeholders will also be engaged through individual discussions and in more formal settings.

40. Consultation will include on line questionnaires, service user focus groups and public events. Once the consultation has concluded, results will inform the design of the new model. The results of the consultation and the recommended final model including an updated financial position will be presented to Cabinet for a final decision in the autumn of 2017. A formal full staff consultation of 45 days will be required after the Cabinet decision in the autumn 2017 prior to full implementation.

## **J. Progress Monitoring**

41. Following close of consultation, a report to Cabinet will be produced.

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### **Background Papers**

None

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### ***Your questions and views***

*If you have any questions about the matters contained in this paper please get in touch with the Contact Officer whose telephone number is given at the head of the paper.*

*If you have any views on this paper that you would like the Cabinet Member to consider, or if you wish to object to the proposed decision, please inform the Democratic Services Team by **5.00pm on Friday 07 July 2017**. This can be done by telephone (to 01296 382343 or email [democracy@bcc.gov.uk](mailto:democracy@bcc.gov.uk) )*