



Have your say - improving early help services for children and families in Buckinghamshire

Introduction

We all want our children and young people to be happy, healthy, safe and successful.

For Buckinghamshire County Council, that means making sure we give families the right support, in the best way, at the right time. Part of this is how we can support families better earlier, to avoid small problems getting bigger. We call this early help.

With early help, families get the support they need to overcome all sorts of problems. This could be:

- ▶ support with being a parent and doing it well
- ▶ debt advice and getting back into work
- ▶ building better relationships as a family
- ▶ how to get help for mental health, substance misuse or domestic abuse problems.

We want to work with families before their problems become too difficult to manage and help them to become resilient so they can cope with problems in the future using local support services.

Our focus is always on how to make life better for children and young people within their family.



Why do we need to change?

The needs of the community and the families in Buckinghamshire are changing.

- ▶ There are 131,000 children (0-19) in Bucks and this will increase to up to 145,000 by 2031.
- ▶ Although two thirds of the families that our children's services currently support live in Aylesbury, High Wycombe and other larger towns, a third of families who need our support live in much smaller and rural areas.

We aren't always reaching the people most in need of our help, quickly enough or in the right ways.

- ▶ There are many families getting support from a number of organisations to help with problems they are facing as a family – but this support isn't always joined up. This causes confusion and frustration for the family, and it doesn't always make things better quickly or in a way that lasts.
- ▶ When there is one issue or problem in a family it affects everyone – so treating problems on their own doesn't work.
- ▶ Families want to tell their story once or to a small number of people that they trust.
- ▶ Many families are not getting the help they need early enough, meaning they end up needing much more support than they might have done if we had helped them sooner.
- ▶ We have reviewed the use of our early help services including children's centres and youth services. The evidence shows that they are not always helping the children and families that need it the most, so we need to change that.

Our proposed solution

We need to focus our time and money on those who need our help the most.

We also need to change how we reach out and interact with families in our communities.

We want to:

- ▶ support families earlier, so their circumstances improve quicker and problems don't become too difficult to manage.
- ▶ give families the tools to help them solve their own problems and also be more resilient in the future – so they know where they can go for help when they need it.

To do this, we plan to bring together all the people who work with children and young people aged up to 19 and their families in those early days when problems are getting tough, by creating one service: the Early Help Service.

This new service would be modelled around family workers who will be based in the community so they are closer to where the families who need

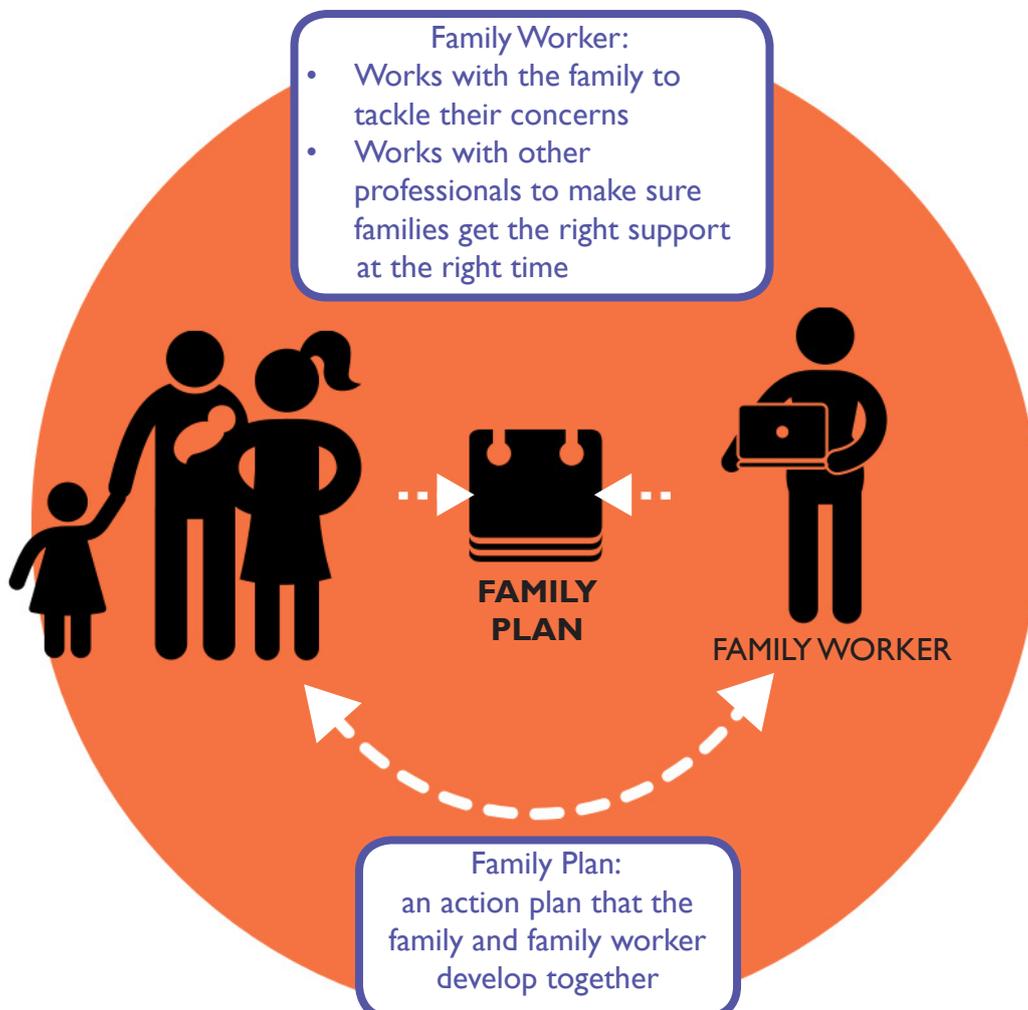
our support live. This will mean they can reach out to these families to work with them at home or in places they are most comfortable. This could be a local community venue or a coffee shop.

This will provide families with:

- ▶ support to manage ALL of the problems they are facing, with their consent and involvement.
- ▶ ONE person they can rely on: a family worker who will work with the family on an action plan to tackle all of their concerns and needs together, not separately.

The aim is to support families with early help and work with them to identify and resolve problems to be able to stay together. The end goal is always to give them the skills and strength to be able to cope with problems when they arise or at least know where to go to get that support earlier.

In the future, we hope to be able to bring other teams and organisations together to make this even better for families in Buckinghamshire. This could include people like health visitors, community groups and charities that work with families.



Doing this will mean changes.

We propose to redesign and bring together many of our services which provide help to children, young people and families in those early stages of a problem. This will involve some changes to existing early help services we currently deliver or commission. These include:

- ▶ Bucks Family Information Service
- ▶ Children's centres
- ▶ Advice and support for young people through Connexions (Adviza)
- ▶ Early Help coordinators
- ▶ Families First
- ▶ Family Resilience
- ▶ Support for children who have lived with domestic violence (Refuge and Outreach) (Women's Aid)
- ▶ Support for parents through Barnardo's
- ▶ Young carers' support
- ▶ Youth Services

We know that some children and families use these services for more social activities such as 'stay and play' sessions, toddler groups and youth clubs. These activities are already widely available across the county and we will continue to signpost people to these and other services that we know are still

needed and are popular. There may be opportunities in some locations for community groups or parish councils to become involved.

Activities, information, advice and support for families and children from 0-19 can be found on our website www.bucksfamilyinfo.org.uk.

As part of our plans, we will be developing the website and information to be even better in the future.

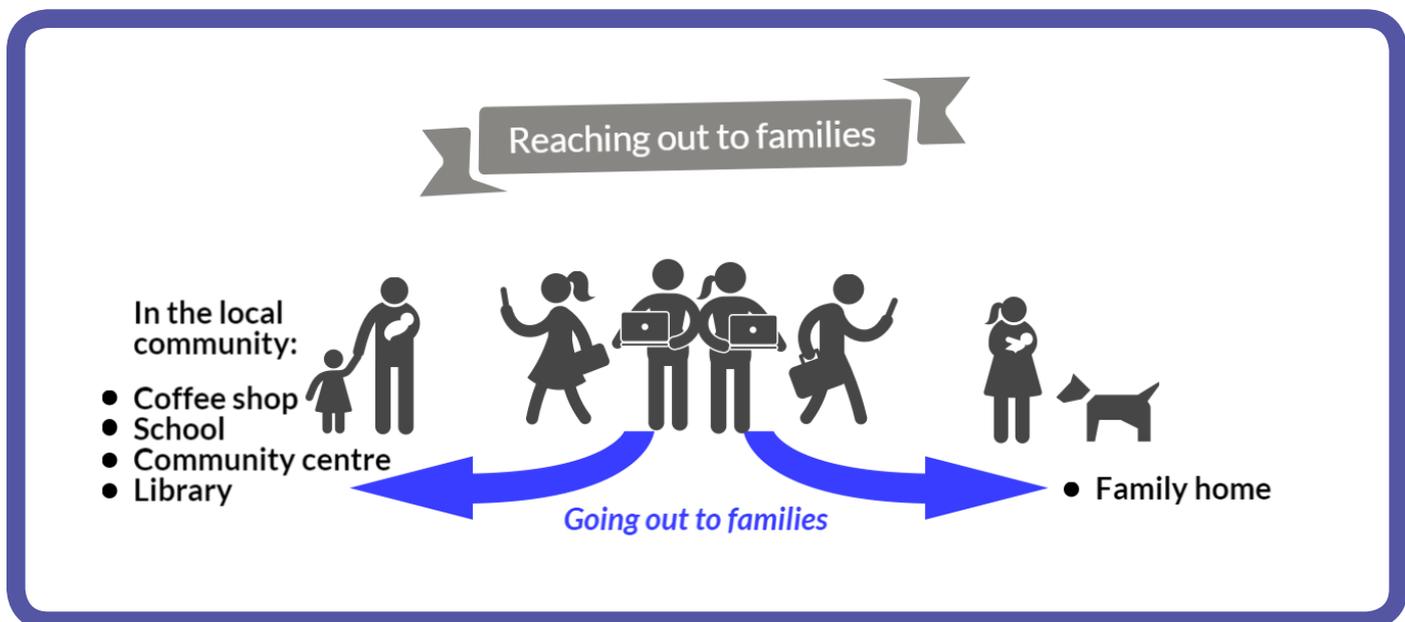
This model of Early Help service for children and families is already working well in many other parts of the country. We have gathered knowledge and research from these areas to help us develop how we think it could work best here in Buckinghamshire.

We have listened to the views of children and families that we work with to create a service that will meet their needs best, and will listen carefully to the responses gathered through this consultation.

We have been working with a number of families in a similar way in Buckinghamshire for a few years. We want to use this experience and knowledge to benefit all families in Buckinghamshire.

"It's better to ask for help earlier than when there's no other option. I wish I'd done it earlier. I'm not a bad parent, I just needed some guidance and ideas. Having someone to talk to outside of my friends and family has made a huge difference to our family life"

Amanda, mum of 3 from Aylesbury Vale



You tell us

We want your views on changes to services for children and young people aged 0 to 19 and their families in Buckinghamshire as detailed in this document.

You may respond as an individual or on behalf of an organisation. Where possible we would encourage you to give your feedback online at www.buckscc.gov.uk/earlyhelp. Please return this survey to your local library or to: Communications Team, Bucks County Council, New County Offices, Walton Street, Aylesbury, HP20 1UA. All responses should be returned by 22 September 2017.

Questions

1. To what extent do you agree with the proposed solution (detailed on page two of this document) for the new Early Help service? (Please circle one of the following)

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree or disagree Disagree Strongly disagree Don't know

2. When improving the way we deliver services for children and their families, what are the most important things we should consider? (Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary)

3. Do you have any other comments on our proposal for the Early Help service? (Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary)

As part of our plans, we are also looking to improve the way families find information, advice and activities that are already available across the county such as ‘stay and play’ sessions, toddler groups and youth clubs.

To do this we want to understand how you find out about activities, information and advice for you and your family.

4. In the last 12 months, have you or your family used any of the following services? (Please tick all that apply)

- Play groups (e.g. ‘stay and play’ sessions, toddler groups)
- Health and wellbeing activities (e.g. baby massage, baby swimming, healthy eating, ante-natal)
- Support groups (e.g. SEN support groups, twins, mental health, lone parents)
- Clubs (arts, drama, holiday clubs, youth clubs)
- Buckinghamshire Family Information Service
- None of the above

5. How did you find out about these services? (Please tick all that apply)

- In your local area (posters, advertising)
- Through someone you already know (e.g. health visitor, family worker)
- By phone via the Buckinghamshire Family Information Service
- By phone via the customer service number at the county council
- Via the Internet on social media e.g. Facebook & Twitter
- Via the Internet Buckinghamshire Family Information Service website
- Via the Internet using a search engine (e.g. Google, Bing)
- Via a blog or forum (e.g. Mumsnet)
- Through friends or family
- Another way (please specify: _____)

6. How easy or difficult was it to find the information you needed? (Please circle one of the following)

Very easy Fairly easy Neither easy nor difficult Fairly difficult Very difficult

7. Do you have any other comments about how we can improve how you find information, advice and activities for you and your family? (Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary)

About you

Please fill in this section to complete the questionnaire. This information enables us to use the results to understand the views of different groups of people. Please be assured that all the information you give will be kept completely confidential.

If you are responding as an individual, please answer questions 8-16; if you are responding on behalf of an organisation, please answer only questions 17-19 on page 7.

8. How old are you? (Please circle)

16-24 25-34 35-44 45-54 55-64 65-74 75+

9. What is your gender? (Please circle)

Male Female Prefer not to say

10. Do you have any health problems or disabilities that you expect will last for more than a year? (Please circle)

Yes No

11. To which of these ethnic groups do you consider you belong? (Please tick)

- White
- Mixed
- Asian or Asian British
- Black or Black British
- Other groups
- Prefer not to say

12. What is your full home postcode?

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13. If there are children in your household, what are their ages? (please tick all that apply)

- Under 4
- 5-9 years old
- 10-14 years old
- 15-19 years old
- There are no children in my household

14. If there are children in your household, do any of them have any health problems or disabilities that you expect will last for more than a year? (Please circle)

Yes No Not applicable

15. Which of these activities best describes what you are doing at present? (Please tick)

- Employee in a full-time or part-time job
- Self-employed full or part time
- On a government supported training programme (e.g. Modern Apprenticeship/ Training for Work)
- Full-time education at school, college or university
- Unemployed and available for work
- Permanently sick/disabled
- Wholly retired from work
- Looking after the home
- Doing something else

16. If you work, which of the following best describes where you work? (Please tick one)

- Outside of Buckinghamshire
- In Buckinghamshire
- In Buckinghamshire for Buckinghamshire County Council
- In Buckinghamshire for a service that is commissioned by Buckinghamshire County Council
- In Buckinghamshire for another public or voluntary sector organisation
- Prefer not to say

Please only answer the following questions if you are responding on behalf of an organisation rather than as an individual.

17. Please indicate which category best describes your organisation.

- A private business
- A voluntary organisation
- A community group
- A public sector organisation
- Other (please specify): _____

18. Please indicate which category best describes where your organisation currently operates.

- Operating inside of Buckinghamshire
- Operating outside of Buckinghamshire
- Operating both inside and outside of Buckinghamshire

19. What is the name of your organisation?

Thank you for your time. We will share the results on our website at www.buckscc.gov.uk/earlyhelp.