

HAVE YOUR SAY

Improving early help services for children and families in Buckinghamshire

Additional Information - September 2017

This document should sit alongside the main consultation document as it provides supplementary information only

To respond to the consultation visit

<http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/earlyhelp>

You said, we're listening

We are now mid-way through our consultation on improving early help services for children and families. Thank you to those of you who have already replied. Feedback so far shows that more detail about the proposal would be useful. So we have added further information about the current services and how these would change with the proposed new service.

If you have already responded but now wish to add more, please complete the survey again. Responses already sent in will still be included. **The consultation will now close on 16 October 2017 to allow as much time as possible for responses.**

To save the council money we would encourage you to give your feedback online at www.buckscc.gov.uk/earlyhelp. You can also complete the survey online in one of [our libraries](#).



The Proposal

The original consultation document outlines the proposal for a new Early Help service that will:

- 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 0 - 19, and their families, in those early days when problems are getting tough, by creating one service: the Early Help Service.

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 changes to existing early help services we currently deliver or commission.

The affected services are:

- The **Buckinghamshire Family Information Service**, an information service for families with children aged 0 - 19 and professionals through a website, social media and phone. www.bucksfamilyinfo.org
- Advice and support on education, employment and training options for young people aged 13 - 19 through **Connexions** (Adviza). They offer mentoring and support for young people.
- **Early Help coordinators** who co-ordinate referrals from families, partners and Children's Social Care for Early Help services through regular multi-agency panels.
- **Families First** supports the whole family across all age groups, covering all the issues they face making a difference and building their resilience so that they can cope when problems occur in the future.
- The **Family Resilience service (FRS)** work with children, young people aged 0 - 19 and their families who need support but do not need the help of social care. They deal with all the issues a family faces, through direct work and through the coordination of other agencies. Family help is provided in family homes and community settings. They also deliver a range of parenting and other support group programmes.

- **Support for children who have lived with Domestic Violence** through Women's Aid. They provide group work and 1 to 1 support for children living in temporary accommodation as well as supporting primary school aged children overcome the trauma of having lived with domestic violence.
- **Support for parents through Barnardo's** who train and co-ordinate volunteers to support families with at least one child under 8. Volunteers go into homes or temporary accommodation and provide advice and practical support with parenting, networking, accessing benefits and services
- **Support for young carers** aged 6 - 18 through volunteers and paid workers who provide one to one work and activities that allow them to take a break from their caring responsibilities.
- The **Youth Service** work with young people aged 11 to 19 (or 25 for those with additional needs) to provide informal personal and social, education and information support and guidance. They provide specific support through 1 to 1 and small group work to allow young people to learn from their peers and develop the skills needed to move successfully into adulthood. They also provide street based youth work; this often takes place in areas of deprivation and/or rural areas and/or where there is anti-social behaviour.

There are currently 3 youth centres run by the Youth Service across the county in the following locations (hyperlink to BFIS):

Youthspace Aylesbury
 Youthspace Wycombe
 The Roundhouse, High Wycombe

- **Children's Centres** provide a mixture of activities for all families with children under 5 as well as more specific support for families who need more help. This work supports other services such as the Family Resilience Service and Children's Social Care and includes programmes and individual support on parenting issues for families in their homes. The centres are also used by other agencies to deliver their services, including health visitors, midwives, Jobcentre Plus and some voluntary agencies.

There are currently 35 Children's Centres and 2 satellite centres in the following locations.

Aylesbury	Smaller towns and rural areas
Elmhurst Children's Centre	Amersham Children's Centre
Southcourt) Children's Centre	Marlow Children's Centre
Quarrendon) Children's Centre	Beaconsfield Children's Centre
Oakfield and Bedgrove) Children's Centre	Ivinghoe and Pitstone Children's Centre,
Wendover Children's Centre	Risborough Children's Centre

Bearbrook Children's Centre	Burnham Children's Centre
Chesham	Denham and Gerrard's Cross Children's Centre
Newtown) Children's Centre	Prestwood and Missenden Children's Centre
Waterside) Children's Centre	Stokenchurch and Hambledon Valley Children's Centre
High Wycombe	The Ivers Children's Centre
Castlefield) Children's Centre	Bourne End and Wooburn Green Children's Centre
Hamilton Road Children's Centre	Steeple Claydon Children's Centre
Millbrook Children's Centre	Buckingham Children's Centre
Hazelmere and Loudwater Children's Centre	Wing Children's Centre
Disraeli) Children's Centre	Haddenham Children's Centre
East) Children's Centre	Chalfont Children's Centre
Abbey/ Mapledean) Children's Centre	Waddesdon and Whitchurch Children's Centre
Hampden Way) Children's Centre	Stokenchurch and Hambledon Valley (Satellite)
	Marlow Children's Centre (Satellite)
	Farnham Children's Centre - Lane End (Satellite)

Creating a new Early Help service will mean changes to all of these services.

What will be different with a new Early Help service?

With less money there is a need to move away from services for all to more targeted services for those who need our help the most, focusing on support for the whole family. We have also been reviewing how we deliver Early Help services in a more joined up and coordinated way which was highlighted by Ofsted in 2014 as a key area for improvement.

Almost all of our current early help services focus on either a specific issue or age group which means families will often be getting help from a number of different teams and organisations.

- We will bring together all these services providing early help support to children and families into one service.
- We will create Early Help teams of family workers based in the communities where the families who need support live.
- There will be nine Early Help bases, located in the areas where we know we are needed the most. We have looked at the families and children we currently work with and considered future housing growth to identify the best locations.

Whilst demand for services is across the county, two thirds of children and families who need our support are in Aylesbury, High Wycombe and other large towns such as Chesham. The remaining third is spread across smaller towns and rural areas. We need to be able to support families living in large towns but also be able to go out to families in rural areas.

Some of these bases could be located in existing Children's Centres or in other local community venues. We will take into account to the accessibility of buildings when deciding on the locations.

- The Early Help bases will provide targeted support. Families will be invited to activities or one to one support and these bases will be used to offer group sessions such as parenting courses and partner led sessions (for example, breastfeeding support run by health visitors) for those who need this support. Other group sessions may be run in other community settings, such as schools or village halls, depending on the demand. In the proposed new service, there will not be a 'drop in' option at the new Early Help bases for families.
- The Early Help bases will give the teams space to work with groups of families on specific issues but their main focus will be to go out into the community and schools where the people who need us are.
- These nine Early Help bases will replace the current Children's Centres and other early help services, bringing together professionals working with children and families in the early stages of a problem. Currently Children's Centre opening hours and the services that they offer is varied. There is not a consistent service across the county, centres are not always in the right places and they only provide services for families with children under the age of 5. Other early help services are structured around specific issues or age groups and therefore don't support the whole family. We know problems affect everyone in the family so treating them on their own doesn't always work in the long term.
- We know that some children and families use some of the current 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.

What types of support will be offered by a new Early Help service?

We will aim to provide practical, family centred and intensive, consent based support for families. Support can be provided to the whole family, children and young people within the family, or to groups of families who have the same problems.

The support will be agreed with the family, and be based on what their needs are. We will continue to learn from families and from local and national research as to what works best to help families.

Some examples of what could be provided include:

- How to build better relationships within the family
- What works to improve children's behaviour
- Understanding and managing children with special educational or physical needs
- How to be safe – for children and for parents
- How to be the best parent you can be
- Benefits and work, including CV preparation and interview training
- Advice on housing problems
- Budget management
- Debt counselling/advice
- Cooking healthy meals on a budget
- Support with applications for food banks/charitable grants
- Advice and support on finding childcare
- Advice and support with positive activities – for children, young people and whole family
- Practical support for a clean, safe home
- Help to talk to other professionals better – including schools
- School attendance
- Attending appointments with family members (e.g. health appointments)
- Bringing together the wider family to solve problems

Some examples of what group sessions could include:

- Parenting courses
- Freedom Programme (for Domestic Abuse)
- Young parents groups
- Workshops around volunteering, job applications and interview skills
- Groups for parents of children/young people who self-harm
- Keeping safe – a group for children/young people
- Parents and children group, supporting the development of positive relationships
- Mindfulness group work with parents, for those that are socially isolated/vulnerable
- Life skills course – how to manage your own life and build your skills

How will I be able to access early help services going forward?

The aim of a new Early Help service is to bring together services for children and families and work as one to make it simpler and easier for families. This means they will only have one lead worker who will bring in additional expertise if needed.

As the centres will not operate on a drop in basis, the main route will be via a central phone number and website for families and professionals. Information and advice

will also be available about activities in Buckinghamshire for children, young people and families.

Activities, information, advice and support for families and children from 0-19 can be found at www.bucksfamilyinfo.org . As part of our plans, we will be developing this website and information to be even better in the future.

We have looked at how this works across the country and considered other options

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 through the Family Resilience Service and the Families First project. We want to use this experience and knowledge to benefit all families in Buckinghamshire.

We considered three other options before reaching the proposal for a new service. These were:

1. To keep all existing commissioned and in house early help services in their current format but reduce all budgets equally. Whilst fair, this would mean that some services would no longer be able to run to their current level and would impact on their ability to support children and families.
2. To keep only those services able to demonstrate effectiveness and good results for children and families they are working with and close others not doing this. Services provided would be most effective in supporting children and families but would mean the removal of a number of services and could put some children and families at risk and in the long term could increase demand on more costly social care services
3. To keep and bring together all County Council early help services and stop all early help services we pay others to run. This would be a relatively simple process and would retain council employees. However, this would mean the removal of a number of services impacting the breadth of support available and could potentially increase demand on more costly social care services in the future.

We recommend that developing a new service will create new opportunities and better benefits for children and families. A new service would provide the best value for money and the best opportunity to improve outcomes and reduce demand on children's social care and education services. This would give us the opportunity to bring together the skills and expertise across current early help services and provide a more seamless and joined up approach to working with families as a whole as opposed to individual problems or age groups. This option, based on emerging national best practice, has therefore been developed and is the proposal for a new Early Help service for Buckinghamshire.

To give your feedback to our proposals for a new Early Help service please go to www.buckscc.gov.uk/earlyhelp - closing date **16 October 2017**