

Report to Cabinet

Title:	Early Help For Children and Families
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Local members affected:	All Members

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Summary

1. This proposal for a new Early Help Service reinforces the council's ambition to continuously improve services, and with partners, to put the county's children and families at the heart of our thinking. Shifting the emphasis from reactive services that intervene when things have become too difficult for families to manage, to preventative co-ordinated services that support families to become resilient, so they can cope with problems in the future. It will form a key component of our implementation of the county's recently agreed Early Help Strategy and will drive improvements in both service effectiveness and efficiency.

What do we mean by Early Help in Buckinghamshire?

2. Providing early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later. Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life, from the foundation years through to the teenage years. Early help can also prevent further problems arising, for example, if it is provided as part of a support plan where a child has returned home to their family from care.

Effective early help relies upon local agencies working together with families to:

- Identify children and families who would benefit from early help
- Undertake an assessment of the need for early help
- Provide targeted early help services to address the assessed needs of a child and their family which focus on activity to significantly improve the outcomes for the child

Local authorities, under Section 10 of the Children Act 2004, have a responsibility to promote inter-agency cooperation to improve the welfare of children (Working Together 2015)¹.

¹ See Appendix 1: Buckinghamshire's Early Help Strategy

3. 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 remains a need to focus our resources on those who need our help the most, in order to improve outcomes for children and families, reduce the need for statutory services and achieve the required savings already agreed by the county council.

There is also a moral imperative to:

- Improve life chances for children
- Encourage a happier, more productive society

4. 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.

5. 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 Review is one of the work strands of this programme. It aims to:

- put the children and families at the heart of our thinking and design services that simplify the complexity of support that is currently available across a range of organisations
- 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

On 10 July 2017, there was a Cabinet decision to go out to public consultation regarding the proposed changes to Early Help services. The consultation closed on 16 October 2017; consultation results have shown:

- 50% agreement / 32% disagreement across residents (net agreement 18%) with the key principles of the model

- 56% agreement / 31% disagreement across organisations (net agreement 25%) with the key principles of the model.

The key principles of the proposed model for a coordinated offer of 'early help' are:

- One countywide Early Help Service targeted at families most in need, providing whole family support, dealing with all the issues a family faces, with their involvement and by consent
- A lead family worker model where workers will be based at and work from a community setting, able to reach out to families at venues where they feel most at ease
- Multi-skilled workers from a wide range of backgrounds
- To use practical, evidence based interventions that are proven to work

As a result of the valuable insight gained from the public consultation and through discussions with partners, the following additional principles have been developed:

- To work with voluntary organisations, health services, police/criminal justice and Department for Work and Pensions/Job Centre Plus to adopt an early help approach to enable families to access information, guidance and support so that issues do not escalate
- To reduce the amount of referrals for Education, Health and Care Plans by working more closely with schools
- To support signposting, information, advice and guidance through development of the Buckinghamshire Family Information Service, so that families know where to go when they need help. This will help prevent issues escalating to a point where a referral is made to the Early Help Service
- To work with our schools enabling them to work more collaboratively together with key partners early on in order to prevent needs escalating

Recommendations

1) That Cabinet accepts the proposal to create a new Early Help service, designed in line with the stated key principles and within agreed resources. This means therefore that the new service will operate on the basis of:

- Close alignment with the Early Help Strategy²
- One countywide Early Help Service, formed by remodelling current county council service provision and integrating or aligning relevant services that are provided or commissioned by partner organisations
- Targeted work with those children and families most in need
- A network of nine community team bases, from which family workers will go out into the community to reach families at locations where they feel most at ease.

² Early Help Strategy signed off by the Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board on the 19.9.17 and the Children's Partnership Board on the 4.9.17; see Appendix 1

- The team bases are proposed to be at seven existing Children’s Centres, as listed below, along with the remaining two areas – Quarrendon and Buckingham - currently being assessed for appropriate locations:
 - Aylesbury, covering the Quarrendon area
 - Aylesbury Southcourt, Aylesbury College Campus, Oxford Road
 - Aylesbury Elmhurst, Dunsham Lane
 - Buckingham: this team base will be established as part of the options being explored for co-location of a variety of public sector services.
 - Burnham, Minniecroft Road
 - Chesham Newtown, Berkhamstead Road
 - Wycombe Castlefield, Rutland Avenue, Castlefield
 - Wycombe Millbrook, Mill End Road
 - Wycombe Hamilton Road
 - The proposal recognises that some parts of the county will require teams to operate from other locations in order to be as close as possible to the families that they are supporting. The Buckinghamshire Public Estates Partnership, and its work on developing a wider network of multi-agency community hubs and smarter use of the network of public sector buildings will complement and support the Early Help Service in delivering the right services at the right time in the right place. This will be particularly relevant in rural areas, for example around Buckingham and Winslow and in areas in the south of the county such as Iver, Denham and Burnham.
 - A lead family worker model, based in the community team bases
 - Multi-skilled workers from a wide range of backgrounds
 - Whole family support dealing with all the issues a family faces, with their involvement and consent
 - The use of practical techniques and evidence based interventions to help families understand where they are (assessment) and where they need to be (outcomes), developing a clear plan to help them get there
 - Joint working with partners to enable families to access information, guidance and support to prevent issues escalating
 - Working closely with schools to deal with the demands on Special Educational Needs and referrals for Education, Health and Care Plans
 - Working with education providers to enable them to work more collaboratively with partners earlier to prevent needs escalating
 - Developing the Buckinghamshire Family Information Service to enable families to access information easily, so they know where to go to for help.
- 2) That Cabinet authorises formal discussions over the next six months with schools, early years providers, partners and the voluntary and community sector about how the remaining 28 Children’s Centre buildings can best be utilised in the future to maximise their benefit for children, families and communities, within agreed resources.**
- 3) That Cabinet delegates further decisions on the detail of the new Early Help Service, including the re-purposing of buildings, to the Cabinet members for Children’s Services, for Education and Skills and for Resources in consultation with senior officers, within agreed resources.**

A. Narrative setting out the reasons for the decision

Early Help – The case for change

6. The previous [Cabinet report](#)³ (10 July 2017) outlined the 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. There is also a rise in the number of both permanent and fixed term exclusions from schools across the county, and an increase in the number of children who have special educational needs and / or disabilities. The reasons for these increases in demand are complex, but include demographic changes and pressures and reductions in universal⁴ services provided by the Council and other partners. Detailed research and needs analysis has shown that the following factors are significant in driving demand:
- Domestic violence and abuse
 - Behavioural problems in children
 - Mental health
 - Relationship breakdown / parental conflict
 - Poverty and worklessness⁵
7. Problems for children commonly appear in the early years and in adolescence, and it is the **combination** of problems within the family which has most impact on children.
8. 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.
9. Many of the individual services currently delivered are highly valued by their users, and this has been demonstrated through the recent consultation. However it remains the case that some services available to all or poorly targeted services are not well used by

³ Cabinet Paper on Early Help Review 10 July 2017:

<https://democracy.buckscc.gov.uk/documents/s98409/Report%20for%20Early%20Help%20Review.pdf>

⁴ Universal services are accessible to everyone e.g. GPs, Schools; see Buckinghamshire Threshold Document:

http://www.bucks-lscb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/BSCB-Procedures/Thresholds_Document_Sept_2015_final.pdf

⁵ The Troubled Families Programme and an ADCS policy position statement both reinforce a focus on poverty and worklessness, as per documents below:

The Troubled Families Programme are entering a 'new phase' led by the Department for Work and Pensions, with a focus on employment and relationship counselling:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/605838/improving-lives-helping-workless-families-print-version.pdf

The ADCS policy position statement 'A Country That Works For All Children':

<http://adcs.org.uk/general-subject/article/a-country-that-works-for-all-children>

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 ACORN⁶ 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). Overall, less than a quarter of eligible children attend a Children's Centre 3 times per year and only 0.77% of the total of eligible children received individualised support from a Children's Centre.

10. The existing services overlap with each other and yet no single service has the whole view of the children and families' situation, 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.
11. The detailed needs analysis⁷, completed as part of this review showed that demand for Early Help is spread across the county, with two thirds of need in Aylesbury, High Wycombe and Chesham. However, demand for Early Help services is not confined to towns and there is considerable need in the more rural areas, notably in the north of Aylesbury Vale and dispersed across South Buckinghamshire e.g. Burnham and Iver.

Demand has shifted as the demography of the county has changed and this is likely to continue. Therefore, the best way forward will be to have a model that has the advantage of geographical flexibility to respond to changing demand. This means that family workers will have a base in a local community, able to reach out to families in settings/locations where they feel most at ease. Specific buildings and their use are therefore not critical to the success of the model.

12. National policy is progressing 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. The main finding in the current research is that strong leadership both politically and across all partners is essential for the successful implementation of any new approaches.

⁶ ACORN is a consumer classification that segments the UK population. It analyses demographic data, social factors, population and consumer behaviour, providing an understanding of different types of people.
<https://acorn.caci.co.uk/>

⁷ See Appendix 2 for Needs Analysis Summary County Level

13. Models of Early Help across local authorities vary (for example, where services are directly provided or commissioned) but all have common underlying themes. A review of other local authority's experiences, on their direction of travel for Early Help services took place, involving direct engagement and a review of service transformation documents. Key themes included:

- **Whole family targeted service approach:**

Whole family services are provided at nearly all councils reviewed, with the focus being on improving the delivery of these; this largely leading to more effective multi-agency collaboration. At the same time, however, a targeted approach is also adopted by many councils, so that the level of care is appropriate for family and individual levels of need, leading to a more cost-effective allocation of resources.

- **Multi-agency working and community hubs**

Community hubs are largely seen as an ideal means of delivering high quality whole family services that meet the needs of the public and the increasing financial pressures. Reducing the number of children centres is very much seen as an integrated part of this policy, and replacing many of these with community hubs is a practice many councils have either implemented or are pursuing. Indeed, the use of community hubs within former children centres are seen as an effective means of delivering multi-agency working, with these acting as a suitable base for multiple teams to collaborate and work together.

14. An analysis of best practice in other Local Authorities shows that strong Early Help services support an effective system of help and protection for children and young people.

- In North Lincolnshire, one of only 3 authorities to hold a current 'outstanding' OFSTED judgment for services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers; their early help services were described as 8:

'A significant strength, providing comprehensive and far-reaching services that enable children and families to access the right service at the right time, thus avoiding the need for statutory services.'

- In Kent, OFSTED described their Early Help services as 9:

'A comprehensive range of early help services provide good support to children and their families from the earliest point of need. Services are well targeted and coordinated to meet the specific needs of the communities of Kent.'

⁸ North Lincolnshire OFSTED report September 2017:

https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/local_authority_reports/north_lincolnshire/051_Single%20inspection%20of%20LA%20children%27s%20services%20as%20pdf.pdf

⁹ Kent OFSTED report June 2017

https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/local_authority_reports/kent/054_Single%20inspection%20of%20LA%20children%27s%20services%20and%20review%20of%20the%20LSCB%20as%20pdf.pdf

- In Sutton, OFSTED described their Early Help services as follows ¹⁰:

'Families benefit from a well-coordinated and wide range of early help services, preventing harm and reducing the need for statutory intervention. This is making a significant difference, as almost all children and families receive help at the right time'.

The Scope of the Review

15. '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'¹¹. 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) and will also help to prevent school exclusions.
16. A large number of services provide early help within Buckinghamshire. These include GP's, the police, schools, the voluntary sector and services commissioned by the council's own Public Health Team, for example the Health Visiting service. Within the county council (BCC) some early help services are directly delivered, while others are commissioned. The scope of this review was originally proposed to include the following services:
 - Buckinghamshire Family Information Service (BCC)
 - Connexions (Adviza) (commissioned by BCC)
 - Early Help Panel Co-ordinators (BCC)
 - Families First (BCC)
 - Family Resilience Service (BCC)
 - Women's Aid (Support for children who have lived with domestic violence) (commissioned by BCC)
 - Support for Parents (Barnardo's) (commissioned by BCC)
 - Young Carers (commissioned by BCC)
 - Youth Service (BCC)
 - Children Centres (commissioned by BCC)
17. Through a subsequent review of the in-scope commissioned contracts, it was determined that those with Young Carers and Women's Aid needed to be considered differently. A decision was made to remove these two contracts from scope, but with the intention to work with them to clearly align their services to the new model.

¹⁰ Sutton OFSTED report February 2017:

https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/local_authority_reports/sutton/054_Single%20inspection%20of%20LA%20children%27s%20services%20and%20review%20of%20the%20LSCB%20as%20pdf.pdf

¹¹ www.eif.org.uk/what-is-early-intervention

18. It is important to note that the Health Visiting Service, whilst commissioned by the county council's Public Health Team, is not and never has been in scope as part of this review. Services commissioned by the Public Health Team will continue to be provided across the county. However given the close links with Children's Centres, it will be necessary to review the locations from which their services are delivered.
19. The in-scope services within the proposal now include the following only:
- Buckinghamshire Family Information Service
 - Connexions (Adviza)
 - Early Help Panel Co-ordinators
 - Families First
 - Family Resilience Service
 - Support for Parents (Barnardo's)
 - Youth Service
 - Children Centres

Designing a new model

20. In developing a proposed solution for Buckinghamshire, national research, together with insight from over 20 other local authorities about best practice, clearly demonstrates:
- 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, 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
 - A whole family approach is important to long term sustainable improvement and is highly valued by families who have received it
 - 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.
21. The consultation response has shown a 50% agreement / 32% disagreement across **residents** (net agreement 18%) and a 56% agreement / 31% disagreement across **organisations** (net agreement 25%) with the key principles (as detailed in section 4).
22. This reinforces what was found in the research phase, when local and national feedback from families was brought together to inform the development of the draft model.
23. The deadline for consultation responses was 16 October 2017, and the results can be found in Appendix 3. These will continue to inform the development of the model.

The proposed Early Help model

24. 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 service will be formed by remodelling the current service provision and will integrate or better align other relevant services that are provided or commissioned by partner organisations.
25. Success will be directly measured by the outcomes experienced by children, young people and their families. A number of indicators, both qualitative and quantitative have been developed to measure success, based on the Early Help Strategy agreed by all members of the Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board. Feedback directly from children, young people and families will also be included to understand the impact on their lives.

Measures will include:

- Reduction in parents and young people involved in crime and antisocial behaviour
- Improvement in school attendance and reduction in exclusions and referrals for Education and Health Care Plans
- Reduction in children on Child in Need and Child Protection Plans
- Reduction in parents out of work or at risk of financial exclusion, and young people at risk of worklessness
- Reduction in families affected by domestic abuse and violence
- Improved access to the right health provision for parents and children with a range of health problems

Additionally, we will continue to monitor a wide range of existing indicators. Performance and impact will be monitored quarterly.

26. 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.
27. The service will support families in their homes, in the 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 (e.g. parenting groups). The teams will make full use of community resources already available, including volunteers.
28. The initial proposal is for nine teams of lead family workers, working from community settings across the county. The final structure of these teams is subject to resources and staff consultation, which would follow a Cabinet decision to proceed.

29. The new service will also be responsible for:
- the delivery of the statutory function of monitoring the destinations of young people as they leave school and college, and providing support to them so that they can enter employment, education or training successfully.
 - supporting young people with special educational needs to access further education, training and employment as they move on from education, through attending reviews and helping to produce plans to help them progress.
 - supporting children who face fixed term and permanent exclusions, through tackling the family issues that contribute to the behaviour causing the exclusions.
30. The outcomes described within the proposed reconfigured Early Help service include reducing exclusions, improving school attendance and dealing with the demands on Special Educational Needs and referrals for Education Health and Care Plans. Significant work is underway with schools to enable them to work more proactively to address this. It is critical, therefore that the new Early Help service is closely aligned to this work bringing key services including the Special Educational Needs Service and The Educational Psychology Service together with schools to enable them to work in a more preventative way. This was a message strongly conveyed by those organisations in the Education and Early Years sectors, during our discussions with them over the summer of 2017. Currently, Buckinghamshire has higher rates for exclusions than those nationally, sometimes double the rate for particular vulnerable groups. Similarly, Buckinghamshire has a higher prevalence of Education, Health and Care Plans and this contributes to poor outcomes for children and young people.

Access to quality childcare, particularly for our most vulnerable children, contributes to better life chances. Early Help necessarily encompasses the universal childcare offer to 3 and 4 year olds and the targeted offer to 2 year olds; which can reach and provide universal support and signposting to families, identifying those in need of early help. The principles of early help are to prevent risk developing into need and therefore, engaging with education providers to work preventatively is a critical part of our overall Early Help approach.

31. Currently whole family support is already provided where children exhibit behavioural problems in the home or in school. At present, 69% of all referrals to the Early Help Panel involve children who have Special Educational Needs and/ or Disabilities (SEND). Behavioural issues in children are the single most common reason for referral (28%). 27% of referrals to the Family Resilience Service are for children with mental or physical health problems, while parenting issues account for a further 37% of referrals. We therefore recognise that the new Early Help service will need to work with schools and early years settings to proactively identify children and families at an earlier stage of behavioural problems. In order to aid this, we will link specialist SEND officers to Early Help hubs.
32. The needs analysis completed as part of the preparation for this proposal tells us where the greatest need is geographically across the county. Whilst we aim to base teams primarily in those geographical areas, we will ensure that family workers go out to children and families across the whole county. Most of the support provided will be

delivered in family homes or in community settings rather than from the team bases. However, these bases may also provide the opportunity to deliver group or specialist sessions. This model gives us flexibility to respond to changing demand, particularly responding to population and demographic changes.

33. Individual workers will be drawn from a variety of backgrounds, and will bring with them valued expertise and experience. Workers will retain specialist knowledge, where there is a clearly defined need to do so, in order to ensure high level subject matter expertise is built into overall team capability. We will aim to add to individuals' skill sets 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 will be developed to support the implementation of the new service.
34. 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 changes. This builds on the effective approaches evidenced in the Early Help Panel since July 2015, and the multi-agency Early Help Strategy, in place since 2014 and recently reviewed and revised (October 2017)¹². This work is being co-ordinated through the multi-agency Children's Partnership Board, which jointly with the Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board develops and delivers the Early Help Strategy.
35. The consultation responses highlighted concerns that complementary services provided by partner organisations, e.g. the Health Visiting Service and the Speech and Language Therapy Service, are under threat from this proposal for a new model of Early Help. However, many services that use Children's Centres as a venue for their services will continue. For example, health visitor clinics which include drop-ins, post-natal well-being groups, post-natal and antenatal clinics, breastfeeding support, and child development reviews will continue to be provided across the county. Specific services such as speech and language support for children, grief counselling and parenting classes will also continue to be delivered by partners or by the new service. Locations for these services may need to change and be delivered from a broader range of community buildings or venues.
36. For clarity, the county council's Public Health Team has responsibility for commissioning a number of services which align to Early Help. The total Public Health budget spent on Early Help aligned services is approximately £8 million pounds.

The main service commissioned in relation to Early Help is the Healthy Child Programme (HCP 0-19yrs) and Public Health Nursing services. The HCP is an evidence-based early intervention and prevention public health programme for all children and families from pregnancy to 19 years of age. The programme includes a

¹² The Early Help Strategy was signed off by the Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children's Board on the 19.9.17 and by the Children's Partnership Board 4.9.17; this now accompanies this Early Help Review paper as Appendix 1 for Cabinet member sign off.

level of universal provision for all children, with targeted support for more vulnerable children and families. The programme covers:

- 0-5 year olds, delivered by Health Visitors and the Family Nurse Partnership; including mandatory health reviews for all children and
- 5-19 year olds, led by school nurses

The services align with Early Help, whereby contacts with all families' support the early identification of children at risk. Safeguarding is a key part of their work and they are active members of the Early Help Panels and multi-agency responses. The services provide advice and interventions, as well as referring children or parents to other support services when required.

Public Health also commissions the current Young People and Families Drug and Alcohol service. This service aligns with Early Help, providing support for a key vulnerable group of children and young people who are either involved in substance misuse or have parents who are using substances.

There are also integrated adult and young person's sexual health services, with the capability to identify sexual exploitation or other forms of exploitation / vulnerability. They also deliver a one to one intervention for those exhibiting risky sexual behaviour and also offer a training programme for those working in schools.

37. A wider mapping has been undertaken of provision that is available for children and families across the county (Appendix 4). This focuses on the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) and charities, but also includes some private businesses where these provide services similar to those that have been offered through Children's Centres.

It is acknowledged that there is a large voluntary and community sector (VCS) in Buckinghamshire. Past research by Community Impact Bucks has suggested that the size could be up to twice the national average. The initial mapping supports the notion of a large, healthy sector, demonstrating a range of organisations offering a variety of provision across all age groups.

This initial mapping provides evidence of some local VCS organisations delivering provision that is currently available via BCC commissioned services in particular Children's Centres. For example there are many local toddler groups and coffee mornings offering social opportunities for new parents at low / no cost (or a small donation).

It is clear from the mapping that alongside the VCS there is also a very strong market of 'small and medium sized enterprises'. There are a large number of these businesses providing activities for children and parents. Some of these operate across the county and others are confined to a specific location and they are often delivered at community locations such as church or village halls or local playing fields. This

sector also has cross-over with activities offered through commissioned services, in particular Children's Centres, but usually at a higher cost.

This reflects the substantial breadth of services available through these sectors. However, the mapping exercise has highlighted the challenges involved in comprehensively identifying and documenting all of the provision available in the county – and these challenges are highlighted in more detail in Appendix 4. Early Help seeks to involve these sectors in the fullest way in order to deliver outcomes.

Timescales

38. Following a Cabinet decision to proceed, senior officers will launch a formal staff consultation for all those BCC employed staff whose existing roles are affected by the proposals. This would take a minimum of 45 days, concluding in mid-April 2018¹³. This staff consultation will allow front line staff and managers the opportunity to influence and shape the final service structure and will run alongside discussions with existing commissioned providers, so that contracts can be terminated or come to a natural end, or revised in a timely way. We would aim to launch the new service in June 2018, although this is subject to Cabinet decisions, and staff and contractor consultations and practical considerations, such as staff training programmes.

B. Other options available

39. 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 decommission others completely
- Retain and reconfigure in-house services and terminate commissioned services
- Develop a new model bringing together a range of staff skills and experience

40. The preferred option agreed by Cabinet on 10 July 2017 was for a new model, in order to preserve the best elements of existing services, while providing best value for money. The broad principles of the recommended model, based on external and internal consultation that took place between November 2016 and February 2017 were also agreed at that Cabinet meeting.

41. A public consultation was launched on 14 July 2017, which sought views on the model's suggested principles and broad proposals for how the model could work in practice. Initial feedback from the public was that further detail would be helpful, and therefore supplementary information to clarify the proposal was published on 4 September and the consultation was extended for a further 6 weeks, eventually closing on 16 October. The full consultation feedback is attached as Appendix 3 to this paper.

¹³ Dependent on the decision making process

C. Resource implications

42. The Council's overall financial position and plan 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 previously approved by full county council in February 2017 within the Councils financial plans.
43. In line with paragraph 17 and the change to services in scope, the current in-scope service budget is £10.08 million. The savings target of £3.07 million is adjusted from £3.34 million. This is to reflect savings delivered on the youth counselling contract of £0.27 million, which is not included in this review. A service budget of £7.125 million is proposed to fund the new service delivery model.
44. Local authorities are required under section 251 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 to prepare and submit an education and children and young people's services budget outturn statement to the Secretary of State for Education.
45. Using the Buckinghamshire County Council comparator report provided by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA), comprising the latest published data available of the 2016/17 budget estimates, the following can be seen:
 - Buckinghamshire County Council's expenditure on Sure Start Children's Centres and Early Years is equivalent to £65 per head of 0-17 population.
 - The average of other comparable authorities' expenditure is £44.6 per head of 0-17 population. If BCC spent at the average level, this would equate to a saving of £2.455m.

D. Value For Money (VFM) Self-Assessment

46. The proposed new lower cost model has been introduced in a wide range of local authority areas across England over the last 3 years, with many citing positive impact on children and families.
47. 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
48. Existing Children's Centre buildings could be re-purposed, as detailed below in Section F.
49. The new service delivery model aims to improve the effectiveness of Early Intervention which once established, should reduce the demand for and / or cost pressures on statutory services.

E. Legal implications

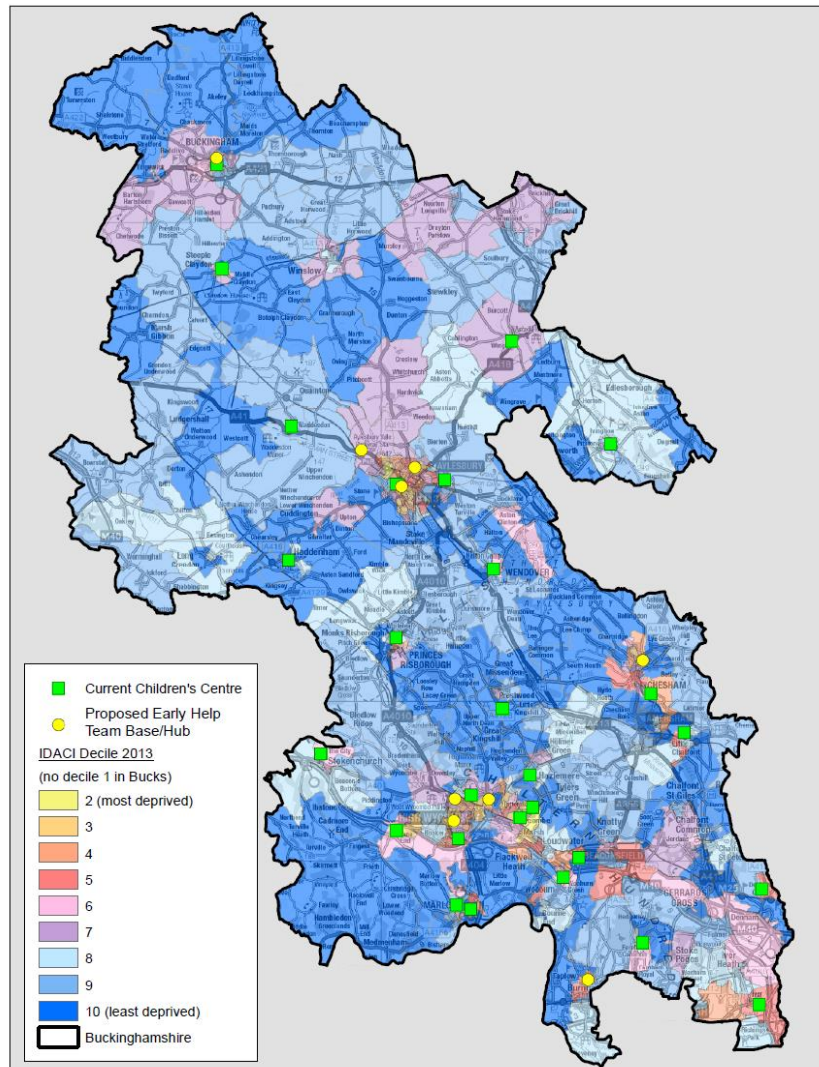
50. Legal advice continues to be obtained on a number of issues, including procurement, consultation and Transfer of Undertakings and Protection of Employment legislation (TUPE); this will inform further developments throughout the review and implementation.
51. A full equalities impact assessment was completed early on in the process as a means to inform the model, this has been updated following the public consultation and we will continue to keep this under review; see attached as Appendix 5 to this report. The new service will ensure that the statutory duties of the Council will continue to be delivered.

F. Property implications

52. There are currently 35 designated Children's Centre locations, operating from 33 main sites and 2 satellite locations (see map in Appendix 6). Two of the Children's Centres cover the so-called 'reach areas' previously serviced by their own centre (Aylesbury Southcourt now covers Aylesbury South West; Beaconsfield now covers Chalfonts).

When looking at Children's Centre buildings, this has to be conducted on a site by site basis, due to the individual circumstances and arrangements of each local area and building. Tenure of the sites on which the Children's Centres are based varies greatly, as below:

- 20 are based on school sites
 - 1 is based on a nursery site
 - 8 are based on other Buckinghamshire County Council sites
 - 1 is based on a college site
 - 2 are based on Parish Council sites
 - 1 is leased from a Housing Association
 - 1 is based on a district council site
 - 1 is based on a church site
53. The following map highlights (see Appendix 7 for a larger map):
- Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) across Buckinghamshire
 - Current Children's Centres locations
 - Locations of the new proposed Early Help team bases



54. Following the wider detailed analysis of need (see Appendix 2) that identified Aylesbury, Buckingham, Chesham, Wycombe and pockets of need within South Buckinghamshire (e.g. Burnham / Iver) being the priority areas, suitability assessments have been carried out in order to assess whether existing Children's Centre locations are fit for purpose as Early Help Team bases.

The front-line teams of lead family workers will work from nine Early Help team bases, as follows. Seven of these are proposed to be at existing Children's Centres sites, as listed below; the remaining two areas, Quarrendon area and Buckingham, are currently being explored for appropriate locations. A map shows the proposed indicative 9 geographical team base areas in Appendix 8.

- Aylesbury, covering the Quarrendon area
- Aylesbury Southcourt, Aylesbury College Campus, Oxford Road
- Aylesbury Elmhurst, Dunsham Lane
- Buckingham
- Burnham, Minniecroft Road
- Chesham Newtown, Berkhamstead Road
- Wycombe Castlefield, Rutland Avenue, Castlefield
- Wycombe Millbrook, Mill End Road
- Wycombe Hamilton Road

55. A team base is required to cover the Quarrendon area and suitable locations are currently being assessed. In relation to Buckingham, the current Children's Centre on the George Grenville Academy site is one of the smallest in the county and is too small to re-purpose as a team base. However, the Buckingham area has been identified by the Buckinghamshire Public Estate Partnership as being particularly appropriate for exploring the co-location of a variety of public sector services and it is anticipated that a suitable base can be established through this route.
56. The proposal recognises that some parts of the county will require teams to operate from other locations in order to be as close as possible to the families that they are supporting. Detailed analysis has been carried out to ensure that all families will have the same consistent access to services regardless of where they live across the county – whether in urban or rural areas. Whilst there are 9 proposed team base areas, these areas will have porous boundaries, this means families will be able to access support across the different areas and will also allow the teams to be flexible to meet need most appropriately. The Buckinghamshire Public Estates Partnership, and its work on developing a wider network of multi-agency community hubs and smarter use of the network of public sector buildings will complement and support the Early Help Service in delivering the right services at the right time, in the right place. This will be particularly relevant in rural areas for example around Buckingham and Winslow, and in areas in the south of the county such as Marlow, Iver, Denham and Burnham.
57. The proposal emphasises that services provided in local communities are more important than the buildings they currently operate from. However, we acknowledge the strength of feeling from the consultation responses about the importance that people place on these buildings as focal points in their local communities. Discussions will continue over the next six months with schools, early years providers, partners and the voluntary and community sector about how the remaining 28 Children's Centre buildings can best be utilised in the future to maximise their benefit for children, families and communities.
58. Options being explored include:
- In areas where additional Early Years places are required, whether Early Years providers (private, voluntary, independent sector and maintained) would be interested in taking up Children's Centre buildings for development to meet the 2, 3 and 4 year-old childcare sufficiency duty.
 - Whether schools with Children's Centres on their sites have additional priorities for re-purposing the buildings, beyond considering Early Years provision.
 - Holding discussions with partners, voluntary and community groups to identify whether they could utilise the buildings for existing services and for community uses/ groups.

Positive discussions have already commenced with other organisations and community groups, this is an on-going process. The lines of enquiry that are currently being explored for complementary or alternative uses for the 35 Children's Centre buildings in total are as follows:

- 7 are being assessed as potential Early Help team bases
- 9+ are being explored as potential Early Years settings
- 12 proposed discussions with schools
- 2 where the Children's Centre space is within existing community libraries
- 1 discussion with a parish council to proactively develop as a community hub
- 1 as a potential for a community hub
- 3 further discussions with the landlord, local community and partners for re-purposing the building for community use

These are initial plans that may be subject to change following Cabinet decision on 8 January 2018 and through discussions with partners on co-location and service integration; this will also be influenced through discussions with communities as to where would be the best locations for the team bases.

59. Under the proposed new model, most of the 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.

Depending on the facilities at each individual base, our intention would be that some group or specialist sessions would be delivered there, targeting local families. It is likely that other group sessions will be available in other community locations as well, in the same way as already happens with parenting groups across the county. This means that specific buildings and their use are not critical to the success of the model; rather it is the importance of the services provided.

Services currently provided by other agencies in Children's Centres (such as health visiting, speech and language therapy, antenatal classes, employment workshops or music sessions) will continue to be provided in those locations where it proves possible with community support to keep the buildings open. Where this isn't possible, they will be relocated to other partner buildings (health centres, libraries, job centres etc.), or provided in other community locations. It is possible that some of these sessions may be delivered from the new team bases, though this would not be their primary function. Discussions are taking place with partners to consider how a smooth transition would work, to identify partner opportunities and to minimise potential disruption to services that will continue to be provided.

60. Through the consultation responses we have heard concerns about the appropriateness of some of the options for carrying out face-to-face work, for example at coffee shops. However, we have learned through existing service delivery, that this is what some families prefer and often young people also prefer less formal venues – as mentioned in the focus groups. People feel more able to have an open and honest conversation in a relaxed environment, creating a better relationship between the individual and the worker. Clearly any work carried out, irrespective of location, needs to be in the context of appropriate confidentiality and safeguarding.

G. Feedback from consultation, Local Area Forums and Local Member views

61. A public consultation was launched on 14 July 2017. Following a mid-point review of the consultation feedback, it was decided that providing more information would be useful. This was added to the consultation and included more detail on the current services and how these would change with the proposed new structure. This additional information was published on 4 September 2017. This second phase of the public consultation was extended for a further 6 weeks to allow sufficient time for the public to respond, closing on 16 October 2017. Focus groups were held across the county with targeted families who were less likely to respond to an on line survey, and sessions with young people were run by the Youth Service. The findings from these were fed into the overall report on the consultation. In summary, the consultation response was positive about the broad principles of the proposed model, but wanted to retain valued services such as Children's Centres. The consultation feedback is attached as Appendix 3.

- **Residents' responses:** although there was 'net' agreement with the proposal overall, there were relatively high levels of both agreement and disagreement with the proposal. Half of residents (50%) agreed with the proposal and three in ten (32%) disagreed. Approximately two in ten residents (18%) either didn't have a strong opinion (neither agreed nor disagreed) or didn't know.
- Half of the resident respondents provided further considerations or made further comments regarding the proposals, which were categorised into topics. The main topics raised were regarding 'Early Help' services (for example providing services that are open to all to use, wanting immediate help when needed through non-targeted services), 'Access' (for example providing local, easy to access services), considerations regarding their understanding of the proposals ('clarity') and concerns regarding service closures.
- **Organisations' responses:** As with residents, there were relatively high levels of both agreement and disagreement with the proposal. Approximately six in ten of respondents from organisations (56%) agreed with the proposal and three in ten (31%) disagreed. Approximately one in ten respondents (13%) either didn't have a strong opinion (neither agreed nor disagreed) or didn't know.
- Organisations' main comments or considerations fell into similar categories as those expressed by residents, including concerns regarding service closures, accessibility, their understanding of the proposal and its 'clarity'.
- **Youth Service Users:** The consultation was also open to children and young people who are users of the councils Youth Service to complete. A total of 79 young people aged between 14 and 24 completed the survey at these centres, where disagreement with the proposals was higher (at 52%) than residents or organisations and levels of agreement were also lower (at 11%).
- **Focus Groups:** Three Focus Groups took place with 16 people that were invited from a range of the current services provided to children, young people and families. Topics covered included 'Assessing Services', 'One Family Worker' and understanding what 'Early Help' means to the group.

62. An article was distributed via member services to Local Area Forums to generate discussion; an article was also included within parish newsletters. Members were provided with a pack of information and an article to share with their local area.
63. A number of written representations were received from commissioned providers, the voluntary sector and political groups. These were responded to by the Cabinet member when received, and have also fed into the consultation report overall. A number of individual partner responses have been received; these have also fed into the consultation and help define the new model.
64. Two public petitions have been received opposing the closure of Children's Centres, one with a total of 2,222 signatures and the other with a total of 179 signatures. These have been considered as part of the consultation report to Cabinet.
65. County council member briefings were held in February, May, June and October 2017.
66. A Council budget consultation took place 17 October – 19 November 2017. It is acknowledged that protecting vulnerable children was high amongst the priorities of respondents. Results showed ¹⁴:
- Residents' views: protecting vulnerable children was the 3rd highest priority for keeping spending the same, and the lowest priority for making any savings from.
 - Views of those people responding from organisations: protecting vulnerable children was the highest priority for keeping spending the same, and the lowest priority for making savings.

The reductions in spend within Children's Services are about focussing services to meet need more effectively. However, Children's Social Care budgets have been increased to cover for demographic growth and inflation.

H. Communication issues

67. 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 an analysis of feedback from service users locally and nationally over the last 3 years.
68. As indicated above, the consultation feedback is attached as an Appendix 3 to this report. A formal full staff consultation of 45 days will be required after the Cabinet decision prior to full implementation.

¹⁴ Budget consultation results for Council's 2018/19 budget:
<https://democracy.buckscc.gov.uk/documents/s106652/Appendix%206%20-%20Summary%20of%20consultation%20repsponses.pdf>

69. Through the public consultation results and focus groups with families, it is clear that the term 'Early Help' is confusing and has different connotations, including 'early' indicating providing for a younger age group (0-5's) and 'help' indicating crisis point. Therefore we propose that we will re-brand the service, gaining service users views to inform the new name of the service.

I. Progress Monitoring

70. Implementation of the new service will be through the Change for Children Programme Board and reported regularly to the cabinet members for Children's Services and Education and Skills. Once the new service is fully established, the project management and governance arrangements will transfer to normal operational management arrangements. The Children's Partnership Board will monitor the new Early Help Service.

Background Papers

Appendix 1: Early Help Strategy

Appendix 2: Needs analysis summary county level

Appendix 3: Public consultation results

Appendix 4: Mapping of Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) provision for children and families across the county, by the proposed indicative 9 geographical team areas.

Appendix 5: Equality and Voluntary and Community Sector Impact Assessment

Appendix 6: Map of current Children's Centre locations

Appendix 7: Map of Buckinghamshire showing Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI), current location of children's centres, identifying 9 proposed Early Help team bases.

Appendix 8: Map showing proposed indicative 9 geographical team base areas (to follow as a supplement)

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 05 January 2018. This can be done by telephone (to 01296 382343) or email democracy@buckscc.gov.uk