

Response to Additional Supporting Papers from Councillor Julia Wassell

Additional information paper 1: Report Regarding Consultation - Appendix 3, Cabinet report, 8 January 2018

Response to point 1:

This was an 'open to all' self-selecting consultation to enable a wide response, including views from a professional perspective.

When further information on the proposals was added at Phase 2 of the consultation, respondents were encouraged to complete the questionnaire for a second time if they had further information to add. Note that the same process and channels were used to promote both the first and second phases of the consultation, both on a general basis and a targeted basis, as per page 240 of the Cabinet report. It was made clear on the website accompanying the consultation and on printed copies for libraries from 4.9.17, that there was additional information, this was as a result of monitoring the feedback throughout the course of the consultation.

The data can be split by Phase 1 and Phase 2, following additional information being added:

- The proportions of residents who agreed with the proposals in both phases of the consultation were:
 - 52% in the first phase
 - 45% in the second phase
- Large numbers of residents responded to both the first phase (1279) and the second phase (712) of the consultation.
- When asked about improving the way we deliver services for children and their families:
 - 4% of residents mentioned factors relating to the clarity of the proposal in phase 1
 - 2% of residents mentioned factors relating to the clarity of the proposal in phase 2 (following the addition of information to clarify the proposal)
 - 3% of residents mentioned factors relating to the clarity of the proposal overall across the 2 phases
- Residents were asked if they had any other comments on the proposal for a new early help service:
 - 40% of residents mentioned factors relating to the clarity of the proposal in phase 1
 - 5% of residents mentioned factors relating to the clarity of the proposal in phase 2 (following the addition of information to clarify the proposal)
 - 27% mentioned factors relating to the clarity of the proposal overall across the 2 phases

Focus Groups:

As part of the Early Help public consultation, 3 targeted focus groups were held across the County, to gain views from families who may not necessarily take part in a public consultation via a website. We wanted to ensure that the views of targeted groups, particularly those we have or currently provide targeted support services to, were included.

The focus groups were informal discussion groups and took place late September to early October 2017 in :

- Aylesbury
- High Wycombe
- Chesham

Internal services and commissioned services in scope of the Early Help Review Project were asked to help by identifying:

- Families within the area that currently or have been supported, that would be representative of the support that each service provides.

Services represented were:

- Youth services
- Adviza Connexions
- Family Resilience Service
- Support for Parents (Barnardos)
- Children's Centres

We asked services / providers to contact the families on our behalf to encourage them to attend. If required, we asked services to consider how we could support these families to attend, either by supporting them with travel, buddying, and/or crèche facilities.

Initial public consultation results were identified and used as topic guidelines, to use within the groups to explore some of the arising issues, these were:

- Accessing services
- Universal services
- One family support worker
- Accessing information
- What does Early Help mean?

The focus group began with an introductory session explaining the Early Help Review and the purpose of the consultation. These took place during Phase 2 of the consultation, so included the additional information. Advice from the Consultation Officer was sought on the appropriate guidance for running of the focus groups.

Response to point 2:

The consultation sought to identify responses from both residents and professional bodies; this was to identify the views from both these different groups and in order to identify issues that are pertinent to the development of the model. Organisations could choose to represent their views as a whole, only 3 chose to respond, these were Buckinghamshire Healthcare Trust, Speech and Language Services and National Association of Family Information Services.

The Early Help Consultation was discussed at relevant partnership meetings (e.g. Children's Partnership Board in August, September and October 2017 & previous Early Help Executive Board in June 2017; Early Help Operational Group in June, August and September 2017; Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children's Board in July & September 2017), to promote the consultation and encourage responses from partners and also for partners to distribute the

consultation across their organisations, to ensure a large and wide response.

The public consultation has not been the only method used for feeding partner views into the development of the new Early Help model; a number of other partner engagement methods have been used (as below) and triangulated to build the model, this has been an iterative process, since the beginning of the Early Help Review.

The Cabinet paper 10 July 2017 (point 14) refers to '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'. This has included:

- Co-design workshops with multi-agency front line practitioners and their managers (November 2016 – February 2017). Four workshops took place across the county with a wide range of partners, at both a practitioner level and management level during the research phase, to identify what is working, what needs to change and what a new Early Help model could look like. This fed into the key principles of the Early Help model.
- Joint Education and Early Help workshops (July 2017): a series of 3 events held across the county with day and evening sessions to ensure availability of partners. The purpose of these events was to engage with partners on the key principles of the model, again what's working well and what would be better if. Those events were held to discuss and ensure closer alignment of the Early Help model with the development of the Education and Skills Strategy for Buckinghamshire.

On-going discussions with key partners have and continue to take place in the development of the model, to plan a smooth transition, identifying partner opportunities and to minimise potential disruption to current services and the families they serve.

Response to point 3:

The information supporting the consultation gave the reasons why we need to change. This was accompanying text for the consultation, which was on the website and printed out to accompany paper copies within libraries. The information is as follows:

“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 proposal

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

The consultation information also provided detail on what the current services are and listed these services. When further information was added in September, more detail was added to explain what these services do and the children and families they support:

- The Buckinghamshire Family Information Service, an impartial information, advice and guidance service for families with children aged 0 - 19 (or up to 25 with special educational needs) and professionals through a website, social media and phone and outreach. 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):
 - 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.”

Response to point 4:

Market Research uses a wide range of methods to sample a target population when undertaking surveys. Random (probability) samples are founded in strong theoretical mathematical foundations that can often be difficult to apply in practice when looking to reach target groups to complete a survey. For example, a probability sample would require a complete list of all residents (and families) in the county to be available, where people are then selected at random to take part (e.g. every ‘nth’ person in the list). Variations of this approach could also be considered to stratify the sample according to ensure that the profile of respondents matches the profile of target groups in the population. A complete list of all residents living in Buckinghamshire and their associated demographic information is not available and practical approaches to sampling must be considered.

The consultation aims to be ‘an open to all, self-selecting consultation (survey) that enables all stakeholders to take part where they choose to do so’ and to gain ‘sufficient responses to understand the overall views and opinions of key stakeholders’ (p5 of the consultation report), which is based on a non-probability method of sampling the population. The consultation was well publicised to make key stakeholders aware that they could take part, this resulted in a substantial response rate (1,991 residents) which broadly reflects the key demographic target groups for Early Help services (for example larger proportions of families with children responded compared to the Buckinghamshire demographic profile). This allows useful deductions to be made from the survey results in relation to the target groups for the consultation. As a sample could not be drawn from all residents living in Bucks, information regarding confidence intervals and statistical significance is provided as a guide when using this information.

Additional information paper 2: A District Councillors perspective

Consultation

Wycombe East Children’s Centre works as part of a cluster model with Hampden Way Children’s Centre (1 mile away) and Castlefield Children’s Centre (over 4 miles away).

The cluster model has been in place since the service was re-tendered in September 2015. This means that workers work across the 3 centres and in other local venues to provide services within those communities:

In a review of Children’s Centre timetables in November 2017, the opening hours of the 3 centres were approximately:

- **Wycombe East Children’s Centre:** Maximum of 15.5 hours per week, with some services being held in other community venues
- **Hampden Way Children’s Centre:** Maximum 16 hours per week

- **Castlefield Children's Centre:** Maximum 19.5 hours per week with some sessions being held in other community venues

Timetables for the Children's Centres are available on Buckinghamshire Family Information Service website, this shows a combined timetable for the 3 Children's Centres (as per link below):

https://search3.openobjects.com/mediamanager/buckinghamshire/fsd/docs/wycombe_cluster_spring_08_01_18_to_30_03_18.pdf

The cluster's Advisory Board meets quarterly, the last one was November 2017, the next is February 2018. Commissioners of the Children's Centre service have advised that previous members of the Advisory Boards under Barnardos were invited to join the new cluster Advisory Boards. In addition to this, anyone with a community role/interest, including Councillors, can ask to join. It is noted that the centres have found it difficult to recruit volunteers to the Advisory Boards.

We have spoken to the Children Centre Commissioner regarding the telephone line at Wycombe East Children's Centre, a problem has been identified with the answer machine and this is being resolved.

As listed in paper 1 (point 4) and below, there have been a number of meetings and communications to Councillors, regarding the Early Help Review and Early Help consultation, see below:

The Early Help Review has previously been considered by:

- Cabinet 10th July 2017 [Early Help papers](#) ¹
- Select Committee 17 October 2017: [Early Help consultation](#) ²
- Cabinet 8 January 2018: [Early Help papers](#) ³

There have been a number of member briefings in the lead up to the Cabinet paper and subsequent decision on 10 July 2017 authorising public consultation. These include:

- February 2017: Member briefing on Early Help Review
- March 2017: Change for Children Programme Select Committee briefing
- June 2017: Conservative Group briefing & Opposition Group briefing
- July 2017: Change for Children Programme stand at the Member Induction Programme marketplace
- October 2017: Select Committee meeting on Early Help Consultation
- October 2017: Change for Children Programme Member briefing

¹ Cabinet 10.7.17: <https://democracy.buckscc.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=6788>

² Select Committee 17.10.17: <https://democracy.buckscc.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=788&MId=9303&Ver=4>

³ Cabinet 8.1.17: <https://democracy.buckscc.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=6946>

Regular direct updates have been sent to Councillors. Local Areas Forums and Parish Councils, these include:

- June 2017: Early Help Review Member update
- July 2017: Early Help Review Member briefing pack
- July 2017: Early Help Review Consultation launch announcement to Members with Parish Council article to use for local newsletters/websites to encourage large response to the consultation
- July 2017: Update to Local Area Forums on Early Help Consultation
- July & September 2017: Updates in Parish newsletter
- September 2017: Early Help Member briefing pack with additional information on extended consultation period
- November 2017: Update on extended timeline and Cabinet date of 8.1.18, to Councillors, Local Area Forums, Town and Parish Councils
- December 2017: Early Help Review Member update / reminder re: Early Help discussion at Cabinet 8.1.18.

In particular, we have communicated with County Councillors, some of which are also District Councillors. We have communicated to local members through the Local Area Forums of which District Councillors are members. We have also communicated with Parish Councils, some of which are jointly Parish and District Councillors. There has also been widespread promotion of the consultation as covered in point 3 of paper 1.

Deprivation in Micklefield

We are acutely aware of the areas of the county where residents suffer particular disadvantage, including Micklefield and Appendix 7 of the Cabinet report highlights them.

We have to reiterate that the proposed Early Help Team Bases are not hubs, i.e. are not primarily intended as service delivery points and the reality at the Wycombe East Children's Centre is that its existing service provision is at most 15.5 hours a week, with some services being provided in other community venues and largely provided by other providers (e.g. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and La Leche League (see link to Children's Centre timetable above).

The family workers will go out from the team bases into the community, working closely with families to reach them where they feel most at ease and where most appropriate regarding confidentiality and safeguarding. Group sessions will be available in community locations where need arises, much the same as current practice with parenting groups. 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 imperative to ensure that residents are able to access the new service, irrespective of where they live and we are keen to work with Councillor Julia Wassell and other local members to explore the opportunities for re-purposing the existing buildings in and near the local area.

Voluntary sector

There are a number of voluntary and community sector activities for families with children aged 0-5 years and 5+ years and for parents / carers, within the Wycombe East, Hampden Way and Castlefield Children's Centre areas, as demonstrated in appendix 4 of the Cabinet paper 8.1.18.

This initial mapping exercise was not an exhaustive list, highlighting only activities provided by the voluntary and community sector and was based on those that largely had an on-line presence. It clearly noted that a number of other sessions provided by for example, NHS healthcare provision and private individuals or small businesses, were not included within this mapping. Free or low cost sessions were identified on the basis of understanding availability of free/affordable sessions for parents.

The need for a Children's Centre in East Wycombe

Children's Centre usage data is collected on a quarterly basis as part of the contract monitoring process; the data below is for quarter 3 of 2017/18 (October – December 2017). For the 3 clustered Children's Centres (as below), these figures show that between 21 – 25% of children aged under 5 within the area, have had at least 5 contacts over a 12 month period. A contact can be a visit to the Children's Centre, a home visit, or a conversation (which can be face to face or by phone), that results in advice and an outcome.

In September 2015, the Children's Centre specification moved to a more targeted model of delivery, with 70% targeted work and 30% universal work. Figures below show that at present, there are small numbers of targeted families directly being worked with (active cases) – see below.

Wycombe East Children's Centre:

- Number of children aged under 5 within the area covered by the Children's Centre = **1175 children**
- % of children registered with the centre = **67.5%** (target 85%)
- % of children in the area having had at least 5 contacts in the past 12 months = **25.7%** (target 65%)
- Number of active cases (children directly supported at level 2/3 on the thresholds document ⁴) = **2**

Castlefield Children's Centre:

- Number of children aged under 5 within the area covered by the Children's Centre = **913 children**
- % of children registered with the centre = **65.3%** (target 85%)
- % of children in the area having had at least 5 contacts in the past 12 months = **21.2%** (target 65%)
- Number of active cases = **7**

⁴ Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children's Board Threshold document, showing the four levels of need from universal services (level 1) through to child protection (level 4) : http://www.bucks-lscb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/BSCB-Procedures/Thresholds_Document_Sept_2015_final.pdf

Hampden Way Children's Centre:

- Number of children aged under 5 within the area covered by the Children's Centre = **979 children**
- % of children registered with the centre = **63.3%** (target 85%)
- % of children in the area having had at least 5 contacts in the past 12 months = **21.7%** (target 65%)
- Number of active cases = **5**

Current in-house Early Help services work on the basis of travelling to families to meet at a convenient location and/or holding group sessions in buildings that are convenient to meet the need within the area. Children's Centre Commissioners advise that current family support workers drive within the areas covered by the Children's Centre, as they are too large to walk. Teams under the new model will be appropriately located to meet the need and will of course minimise travelling times and costs associated and maximise time spent with families.

The Cabinet paper (page 205), regarding the 35 Children's Centre buildings stated:

'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'.

As stated above:

It is imperative to ensure that residents are able to access the new service, irrespective of where they live and we are keen to work with Councillor Julia Wassell and other local members to explore the opportunities for re-purposing the existing buildings in and near the local area.

Additional information paper 3: Children Centre statistics

- An in-depth needs analysis was conducted for the purposes of this Early Help Review to identify geographical areas where demand and issues predominate.
- Data analysis on the main causes of demand and tipping points for children into care on Children's Services was conducted, alongside focus groups and case analysis in order to identify key themes.

As above, Micklefield (Wycombe East Children's Centre) forms part of a cluster of 3 Children's Centres and its existing service provision is at most 15.5 hours a week, with some services being provided in other community venues and largely provided by other providers.

Hampden Way: please refer to recommendation 2 in the Cabinet report:

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.