

Title:	Children's Services Update
Date:	Thursday 6 December 2018
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Purpose of this report

1. To provide the Health and Wellbeing Board with an update of the latest developments within Children's Services.

Early Help

2. Following a Cabinet Member decision in October 2018, the Council launched a 10-week consultation to capture the views on proposed ways to deliver early help services to support vulnerable families and children in Buckinghamshire. Currently, existing services are not reaching those families who need help the most. Only 14% of the families who are currently accessing the Council's early help services in 2017/18 had an identified need for support, compared to an estimated 31% of the 0-19 year old population that may benefit from early help services. With this in mind, it is vital that the Council changes its approach to ensure that the service reach those that need it most to prevent future statutory intervention.
3. The consultation is specifically seeking the views on:
 - a. A draft new Early Help Strategy, which is a partnership document.
 - b. The Council's preferred option for service change, as well as other options.
 - c. The proposed set-up of a network of 14 family centres (the Council's preferred option).
 - d. Possible alternative uses for those children's centre buildings no longer proposed for use for council-run early help services.
4. The proposed family centre model will continue to provide partner services e.g. health visiting and open access sessions for families with 0-5 year olds e.g. stay and play. The area family teams will have staff with the right skills to make sure families get the right support at the right time.
5. Several public meetings have taken place across the County during the consultation period to engage stakeholders and support them in understanding the options and filling out responses. Key partner organisations, particularly health are supporting the distribution of information about the consultation through, for example, GP surgeries. The consultation is due to close on Wednesday 13 December 2018.
6. At the end of the consultation, a report will be prepared by the independent research

company BMG Research on the findings. This consultation results report will be published to inform a Cabinet decision in March 2019.

Special Educational Needs and Disability

7. The Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) improvement action plan has been updated and signed off by the Integrated Services Board in their October meeting. The action plan includes the following key priorities:
 - a. Compliance with the statutory Education Health and Care Planning 20 week timescale, annual review process and effective use of panels.
 - b. Improving the quality of Education, Health and Care Plans and the family experience.
 - c. Ensuring children have their needs met locally in mainstream schools where possible and appropriate through the work of the inclusion hub.
 - d. Developing early identification and early intervention support as part of the Early Help programme that ensures children registered with SEN Support are effectively supported to achieve their potential.
 - e. Developing a shared understanding of co-production, owned across the local area and underpinning all SEND delivery and ongoing improvement.
 - f. Improving the communication with and experience of families leading to a reduction in the number of complaints and tribunals.
 - g. Improving the experience of children and their families preparing for adulthood from year 9 and transitioning to adult services.
 - h. Upskilling the workforce across the local area to ensure children and their families benefit from skilled and knowledgeable professionals.
8. Preparation for a potential SEND Ofsted/CQC inspection is also continuing and the Self Evaluation Framework has been shared with partners and parent/carer representatives in a range of forums. A challenge event has been held to ensure all key stakeholders understand the local context, are able to articulate their strengths and have robust evidence to support improved outcomes. In addition, this event will support professionals to describe the areas for development and ensure they have plans in place to address any areas of concern.
9. On 22 October 2018, Cabinet agreed to start a 10-week consultation on revisions to our home to school transport arrangements. There will be no change to the arrangements for more than 5,000 pupils who are eligible for free travel. There are a number of proposed revisions, which would apply to children and young people who we currently support with transport, but who are not eligible for free statutory home to school transport.
10. The proposed changes include:
 - a. Improving the mix of council provided and commercial transport to provide more flexible options.
 - b. Applying statutory requirements to all Buckinghamshire school children, which would include phasing out of historically agreed local free transport arrangements. Parents choosing a place that is not their nearest eligible school would be required to pay for their transport in future.
 - c. Requiring parents of post-16 students with Special Educational Needs to contribute towards their travel costs. This would bring the application of the transport policy for this cohort more in line with their peers attending mainstream education.
11. The public consultation launched on Wednesday 31 October, and seeks feedback on the options for modernising the service to make it more sustainable. The closing date for responses is 4 January 2019.

Ofsted Action Plan Update

12. The Senior Management Team has now been together since April 2018 and although it continues to identify some examples of poor practice, it is also working hard to influence the way our staff engage with children and young people to improve their outcomes. A phase 2 improvement plan has been produced to incorporate these findings and will be presented to Cabinet next week. The plan concentrates heavily on the impact that first line managers need to have in order to improve front line practice. The plan is a live document and will be under regular review to ensure that actions are further expanded where it is necessary.
13. The service is currently working with partner agencies to secure their contribution to the plan and specifically the actions that they can take to assist our improvement journey.
14. Progress will continue to be monitored and reviewed by the Children's Improvement Board, which now includes representatives from partner agencies.

Ofsted monitoring visit

15. Ofsted is due to complete its second monitoring visit on 11 and 12 December 2018. The focus of the visit will be evaluating the experiences of children and young people who:
 - a. have become the subject to a multi-agency child protection plan that sets out the help they and their families will receive to keep them safe and promote their welfare, and
 - b. have been assessed as no longer needing a child protection plan, but who many need continuing help and support.
16. We anticipate that the findings will be published early in the new calendar year.