

Health and Wellbeing Board

15 February 2017

Report title	Improving outcomes within the early years	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Val Gibson Children & Young People	
Wards affected	All	
Accountable director	Linda Sanders, People	
Originating service	Early Intervention	
Accountable employee(s)	Andrew Wolverson Tel Email	Head of Early Intervention 01902 551272 Andrew.wolverson@wolverhampton.gov.uk
Report to be/has been considered by		

Recommendation(s) for action or decision:

The Health and Wellbeing Board is recommended to:

1. Provide feedback on the Early Years Strategy.
2. Endorse the principles and values of the plan.

Recommendations for noting:

The Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to note:

1. The contents of the Early Years Strategy

1.0 Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- Inform Health and Wellbeing Board of the progress on the development of the Early Years Strategy which includes the City's definition of school readiness.
- To brief Health and Wellbeing Board members on the Early Years Strategy consultation process, currently being undertaken.
- To seek the views of the Health and Wellbeing Board on the key areas contained within the strategy.

2.0 Background

2.1 In November 2016 Cabinet received a report informing it of the progress made toward developing an Early Years Strategy aimed at improving outcomes for children and families from conception to age five.

2.2 Cabinet approved the stakeholder consultation process that took place on the draft strategy, and agreed to receive a further report outlining how consultation had shaped and influenced the strategy and the City's definition of school readiness.

3.0 Early Years Strategy consultation

3.1 Consultation opened on the 14 December 2016 with the publication of the online document through Survey Monkey and will close on 17 February 2017. As well as Survey Monkey, a variety of consultation methods are being used, including focus groups for Early Years Professionals, Early Years Universal Practitioners speaking directly to parents at the groups they attend across the city, and dedicated agenda items at partners' meetings.

3.2 The key areas the consultation is seeking views and agreement on are:

- The City's Definition of School Readiness.
- The principles underpinning the Strategy.
- The four themes the strategy is organised around; good maternal health, parental engagement, high quality education and workforce development.

3.3 Every effort has been made to encourage stakeholders to share their views through social media, City People, and awareness raising publicity. Consideration has also been given as to how the consultation can be made as accessible as possible when gathering views. Whilst the responses from completing Survey Monkey will be contained the flexibility of the other methods of consultation should allow for greater scope. For example when consulting with parents, workers are using I Pads to enable parents to complete the survey, supporting them if they needed help completing it and are also contacting professionals directly to gather their views.

3.4 Four community stakeholder events are being held across the city to gather Early Years Professionals views, and partner meetings that will be attended include Association of Special Provision in the City, Children and Young People’s Scrutiny Panel, Health and Wellbeing Board, and the Leadership Briefing for Head Teachers. So far only one event has been held (23 January 2017) with another one due on 25 January 2017 and two further events week commencing 30 January 2017.

4.0 Survey outcomes

4.1 To date (the consultation does not close until 17 February 2017) 50 surveys have been completed, 20 from professionals, 28 from parents, and two from other sources.

4.2 Regarding **the school readiness definition**, 41 respondents thought the statement clearly set out the expectations for children to be ready for school. Nine did not.

4.3 From the nine respondents who thought that the definition did not clearly set out the right expectations, the responses set out in the table below were received:

Number of respondents	Response
Five	The definition should incorporate expectations both on children and parents around independence skills such as toilet training, dressing, eating and drinking, sitting ready to listen, listening per se, feeling confident and ready for the challenge of school.
One	There should be a SMART objective within the definition.
One	A child cannot be “forced” to be excited and felt that the right environment with good high quality teaching and interaction will enthuse and excite a child.
One	The definition contains nothing but incidental remarks about the capacity of parents to parent to the correct level. The respondent challenged the strategy to address how if parents have not supported their children in those critical first few years, how can short term interventions hope to overcome this deficit.
One	Individual needs. Specific expectations of a child. How this will be achieved within school, guidelines to help define how parents could be supported

4.4 Regarding **the principles** respondents were asked on a scale from one to five (with one being low and five being high) how important they thought the following statements are as principles for the strategy. The table below shows that the majority of respondents felt that all four principles were highly important:

	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL
Work with families to achieve positive and sustainable outcomes, safely preventing family breakdown	1	0	6	12	31	50
Deliver a whole system approach, enabling close working with partners with clarity on roles and responsibilities	0	0	4	11	35	50
Build employee confidence and skills, and empower and support to work creatively and innovatively with families	1	1	4	15	29	50
Provide affordability and enable the financial sustainability of children's services in the future	1	0	2	15	32	50

4.5 In respect of the key strategic priorities grouped into four themes, there was overwhelming support for all of the objectives within the themes.

4.6 Respondents were also asked to identify if there were any other objectives they would expect to find or want to see. The feedback was as follows:

- One respondent asked for there to be reconsideration and development of the education and workforce development objectives to make a stronger strategy.
- Another identified parenting skills as the most important and to include the development of relationships between professionals and parents to ensure there is consistency in approach.
- A third respondent wanted to see an objective around healthy eating, as parents should be thinking about what their children are eating before starting school.
- A fourth respondent felt that this strategy appeared to be targeted at those on benefits and those who may need additional support because of traumatic events.

5.0 Financial implications

5.1 The need has been identified for a 0.4 fulltime equivalent Early Years Improvement role. These costs have been funded from in year savings achieved through the Children's Transformation Service Redesign.

5.2 In addition, on-going support has been identified for parent resources. Based on previous investment through the 2-year-old offer in similar resources the on-going estimated cost of this would be in the region of £18,000 per annum. Funding has been identified from the Children's Transformation Service Redesign to fund this provision. This would provide the ability for a mix of hard copy and digitally accessible resources. [JF/31012017/R]

6.0 Legal implications

6.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report [JB/31012017/Q].

7.0 Equalities implications

- 7.1 Ensuring that every child gets the best start in life has been a key aspiration outlined within early years policy for the past 10 years. The proposals set out within this report seek to ensure that no child, regardless of background, is disadvantaged in the educational outcomes they can secure.
- 7.2 Impact of the strategy on ensuring no child is left behind, irrespective of circumstance, will be measured through action plans which will consider all equalities implications and reported through the Strengthening Families Board to Children's Trust Board.