

# Cabinet Meeting

## 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2017

<b>Report title</b>	Improving Outcomes within the Early Years	
<b>Decision designation</b>	AMBER	
<b>Cabinet member with lead responsibility</b>	Councillor Val Gibson Children and Young People	
<b>Key decision</b>	No	
<b>In forward plan</b>	Yes	
<b>Wards affected</b>	All	
<b>Accountable director</b>	Linda Sanders, People	
<b>Originating service</b>	Children and Young People	
<b>Accountable employee(s)</b>	Andrew Wolverson Tel Email	Head of Service – Early Intervention  01902 551272 <a href="mailto:Andrew.wolverson@wolverhampton.gov.uk">Andrew.wolverson@wolverhampton.gov.uk</a>
	Alex Jones Tel Email	Assistant Director Schools Standards 01902 555275 <a href="mailto:Alex.jones2@wolverhampton.gov.uk">Alex.jones2@wolverhampton.gov.uk</a>
<b>Report to be/has been considered by</b>	People leadership Team	27 February 2017
	Strategic Executive Board	7 March 2017

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### Recommendation for action or decision:

Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Approve the Early Years Strategy

## **Recommendations for Noting**

Note the outcomes of the recent stakeholder consultation

### **1.0 Purpose**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Cabinet of the outcomes of the recent consultation in relation to the development of the Early Years Strategy which includes The City's Definition of School Readiness.

### **2.0 Background and Rationale**

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 Consultation Process and Results**

3.1 Consultation opened on the 14 December 2016 with the publication of the online document through Survey Monkey and closed on 17 February 2017. Stakeholders were encouraged to share their views through social media, City People, and awareness raising publicity.

3.2 As well as Survey Monkey a variety of consultation methods were used including Focus Groups for Early Years Professionals, Early Years Universal Practitioners speaking to parents and dedicated agenda items at partner's meetings.

3.3 Four community stakeholder events were held across the City to gather Early Years Professionals views. Partner meetings attended included The 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.

3.4 The consultation was made as accessible as possible to gain the widest selection of views. When consulting with parents, workers used iPads to enable parents to complete the survey, supporting them if they needed help and partners were contacted individually to gather their views.

3.5 The responses from completing Survey Monkey were more limited by the nature of its structure, however the flexibility of the other methods of consultation allowed for greater scope. This meant that views on wider issues such as the implementation of the thirty-month integrated assessment check, transition to school, the professional relationships between pre-school settings and schools, and the difficulties of recruiting appropriately skilled staff, were captured. These comments will be fed back to the relevant theme leads to inform future action plans.

3.6 However, the key areas the consultation sought views and agreement on were:

3.6.1 The City's Definition of School Readiness:

"Children will be able to express their needs, feelings and wants. A school will ensure that children feel heard and understood by their practitioners. Children will be excited, enthused and demonstrate a willingness to learn both inside and outside the classroom".

It asked if stakeholders' thought the statement clearly set out the expectations for children to be ready for school.

3.6.2 The principles underpinning the Strategy:

- Work with families to achieve positive and sustainable outcomes, safely preventing family breakdown.
- Deliver a whole system approach, enabling close working with partners with clarity on roles and responsibilities.
- Build employee confidence and skills, and empower and support to work creatively and innovatively with families.
- Provide affordability and enable the financial sustainability of children's services in the future.

It asked stakeholders to rate on a scale one to five (*One being low and five being high*), how important they thought the statements are as principles for the strategy.

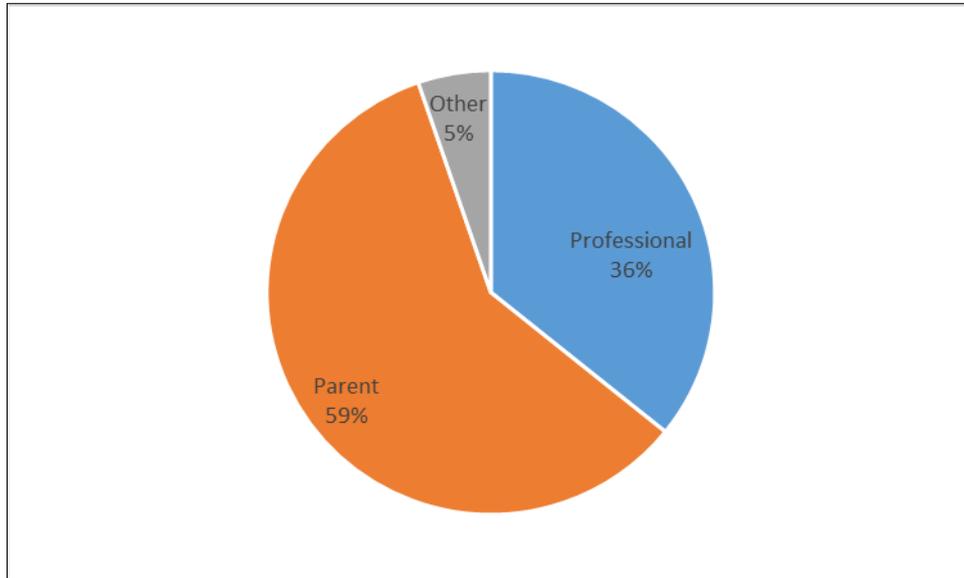
3.6.3 The four themes of

- Good Maternal Health
- Parental Engagement
- High Quality Education
- Workforce Development

It asked if stakeholders agreed with the themes and if there were any other objectives that stakeholders would expect to find or would want to see.

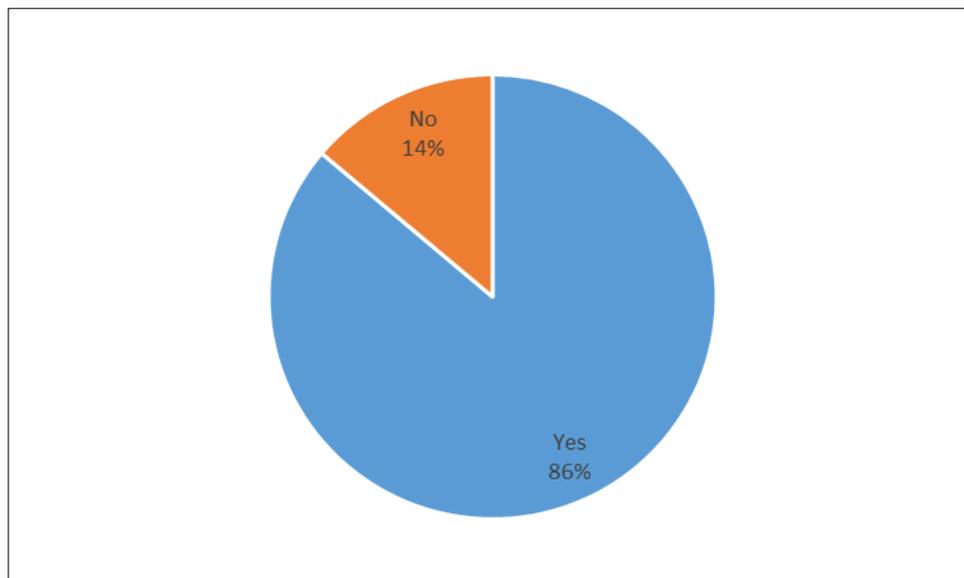
#### 4.0 Consultation Results

4.1 There were 95 Survey Monkey responses; 34 from professionals, 56 from parents and five from people who responded as both as a professional and as a parent.



#### 4.2 Definition of School Readiness

4.2.1 81 people agreed or strongly agreed with the definition of school readiness but 13 did not.



4.2.2 From the respondents who thought that the definition did not clearly set out the correct expectations, comments were grouped around the following themes.

4.2.3 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.

4.2.4 Children should be provided with the right environment with good high quality teaching and interaction to enthuse and excite them.

4.2.5 Carers and parents should be engaged and supported to help their children in the next big leap of their development.

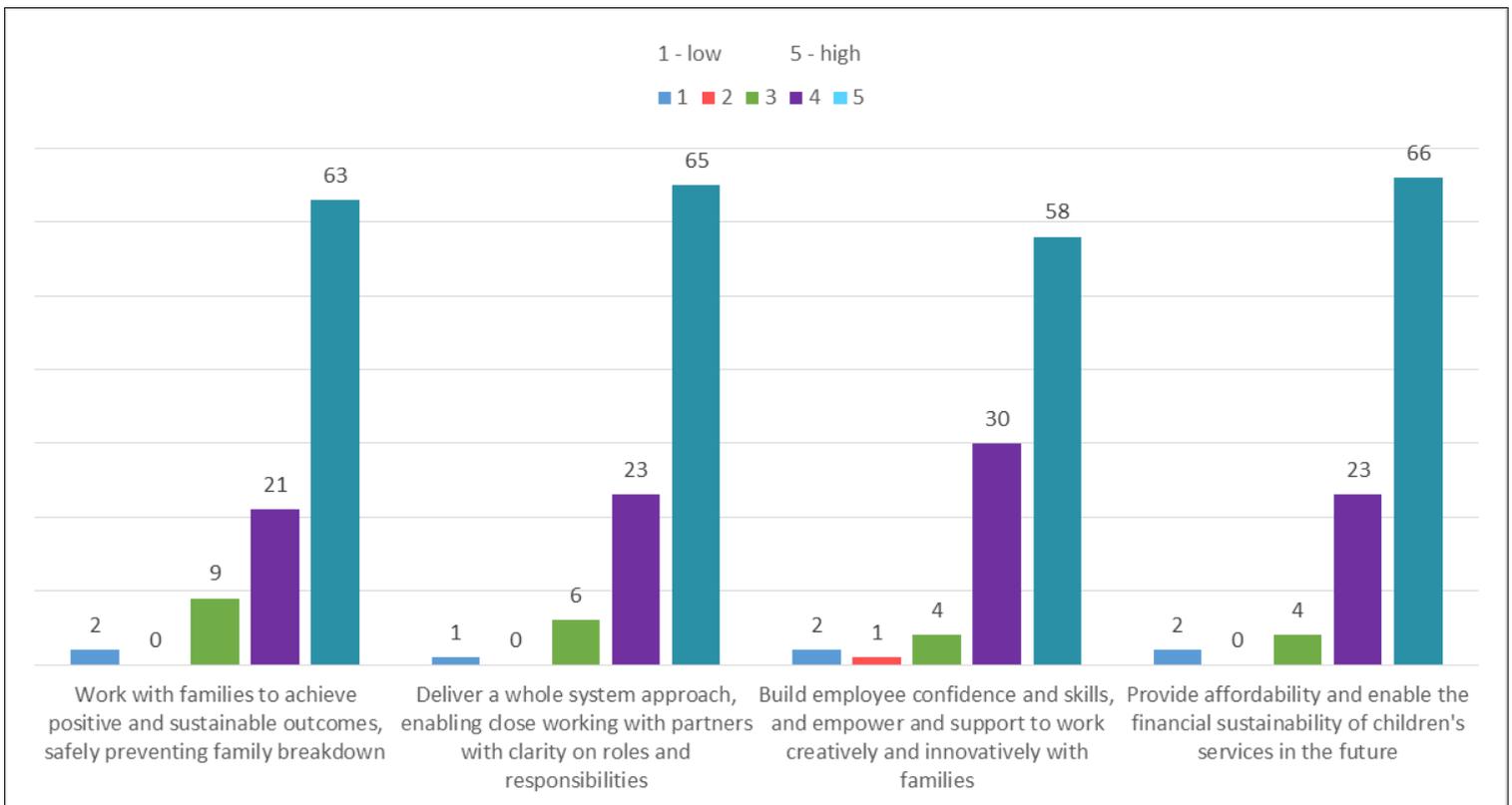
4.2.6 In response to these comments the Definition of School Readiness has been amended to be:

Children are school ready when, supported by their parents/carers, they have self care skills, interact well, and can participate in a range of opportunities to the best of their ability.

This will be achieved through listening to, and following age appropriate instructions, participating in a variety of opportunities and successfully building new friendships whilst taking responsibility for understanding their actions and consequences.

### 4.3 Principles underpinning the Strategy

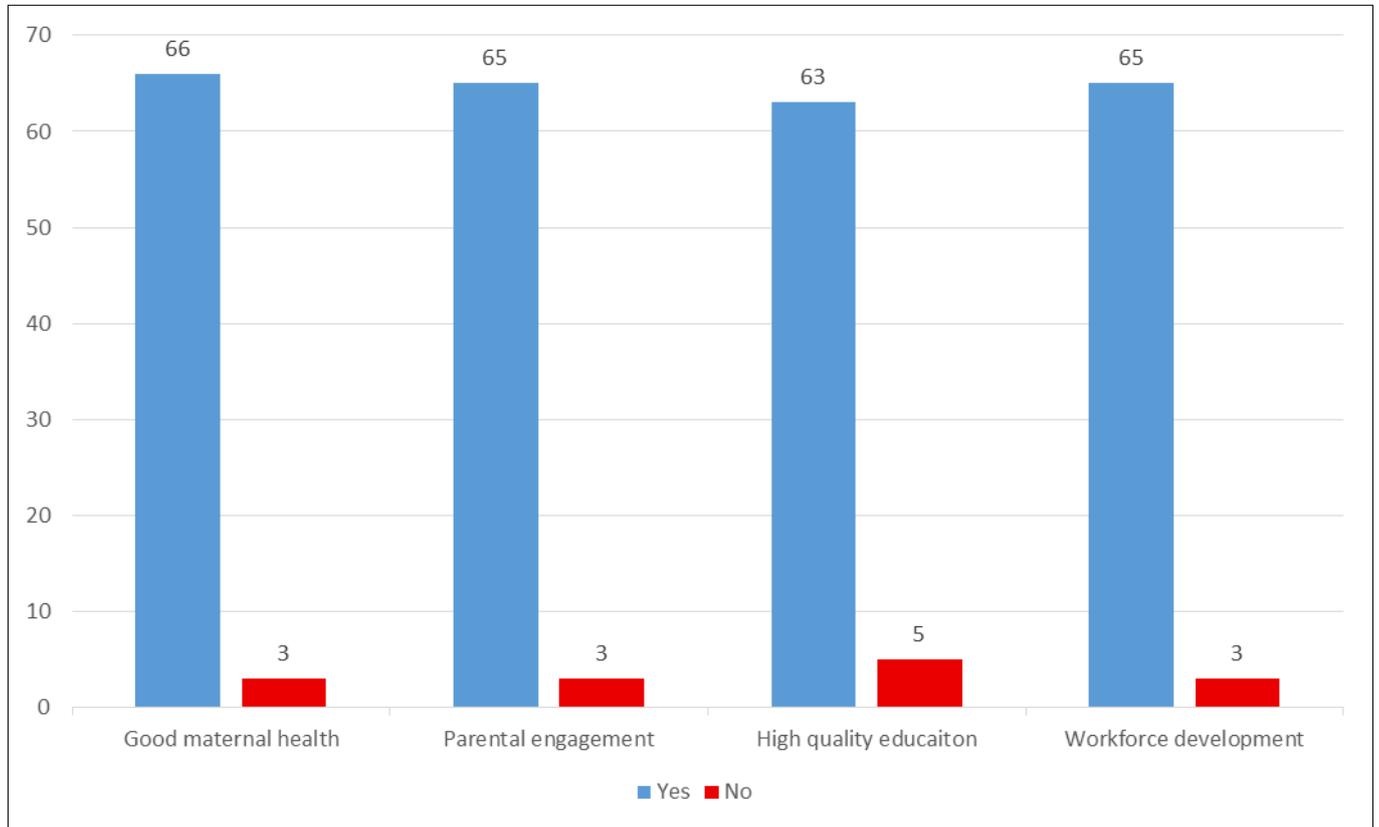
4.3.1 Most respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the principles. See graph below.



4.3.2 Based on this positive feedback the principles will now be promoted within the strategy and to our partners.

#### 4.4 The four themes

4.4.1 The four themes were seen by respondents' as positive and there was overwhelming support for all the objectives within the themes.



4.4.2 However, respondents were also asked to identify any other objectives they would expect to find or want to see. They asked that there be:

- Reconsideration and development of the education and workforce development objectives to make a stronger strategy.
- The acknowledgement of parenting skills as important including the development of relationships between professionals and parents to ensure there is consistency in approach.
- The acknowledgement of the key role that parents play in supporting their children to keep themselves safe.
- The identification of a healthy eating objective as parents should be thinking about what their children are eating before starting school.
- The identification of an objective that supports or develops settings deemed as less than good or outstanding.

- The identification of an objective that provides parents with information about services and settings and their Ofsted judgements.

4.4.3 Because of these comments the strategy will include the following:

- The Good Maternal Health theme will now incorporate an objective focused around healthy eating and how to support parents in ensuring their children follow a healthy lifestyle.
- The Parental Engagement theme will now identify an objective that will focus on the development of positive relationships between professionals and parents.
- The Parental Engagement theme will now identify an objective in relation to supporting parents in their role of keeping their children safe.
- The High Quality Education theme will reconsider its objectives to ensure that it identifies ambitious actions that will deliver a strong strategy.
- The Workforce Development theme will now incorporate an objective that identifies how the City will support settings who have a less than good judgment.

## **5.0 Next Steps**

- 5.1 The draft strategy will be updated as outlined in Appendix A to reflect the feedback from consultation and then launched at a stakeholder event in May. At this event, Wolverhampton will not only confirm its definition of School Readiness, but will also outline its expectations of partners and the role they need to play in supporting this ambitious strategy.
- 5.2 The strategy will be challenged and monitored through the Education Board for internal purposes and the Strengthening Families board, feeding into Children's Trust, for partner engagement.

## **6.0 Financial implications**

- 6.1 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.
- 6.2 Any costs associated with the development of the Early Years Strategy will be contained within existing budget allocations within the Early Years Service.  
[NM/21022017/L]

## **7.0 Legal implications**

7.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report. [JB/09032017/T]

## **8.0 Equalities implications**

8.1 Ensuring that every child gets the best start in life has been a key aspiration outlined within early years policy for the past ten 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.

## **9.0 Environmental implications**

9.1 There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

## **10.0 Human resources implications**

10.1 There are no human resources implications arising from this report.

## **11.0 Corporate landlord implications**

11.1 There are no corporate landlord implications arising from this report.

## **12.0 Schedule of background papers**

12.1 11 November 2015 Cabinet Meeting - Children Services Re-design  
24 February 2016 Cabinet Meeting - Children Services Re-design.  
30 November 2016 Cabinet Meeting - Improving Outcomes within the Early Years

## **Appendices**

### **Appendix A**

Early Years Strategy

<http://www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=11544&p=0>

### **Appendix B**

Table of Amendments to Early Years Strategy