

CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON COUNCIL	Cabinet 25 April 2018
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Report title	Early Help Strategy 2018 - 2022		
Decision designation	AMBER		
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Val Gibson Children and Young People		
Key decision	Yes		
In forward plan	Yes		
Wards affected	All Wards		
Accountable director	Emma Bennett, Director of Children's Services		
Originating service	Early Intervention		
Accountable employee(s)	Denise Williams	Head of Service - Early Intervention	
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Report to be/has been considered by	People Leadership Team Children's Trust Board Strategic Executive Board Children's Trust Board	9 March 2018 14 March 2018 17 April 2018 14 June 2018	

Recommendations for decision:

The Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Approve the Early Help Strategy 2018 – 2022.
2. Delegate authority to the Cabinet Member for Children & Young People, in consultation with the Director of Children Services, to make any minor changes to the Early Help Strategy arising from wider consultation.

The Cabinet is asked to note:

1. That the Early Help Strategy 2018 – 2022 is a partnership approach and the final strategy will be endorsed by partners at the next Children's Trust Board meeting on 14 June 2018.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to set out the Early Help Strategy for children, young people and their families.
- 1.2 The Early Help Strategy describes the intentions to work with vulnerable families at an early stage, to offer support and practical interventions when low level problems emerge and therefore avoid the need for costlier social care.
- 1.3 Implementation of the Early Help Strategy will provide best outcomes for children whilst working to reduce demand on public services and increasing self-sufficiency amongst our communities. The strategy will also support the aims and ambitions for improvement outlined in the Children and Young People and Families Strategic Plan four priority outcomes;
 - Child Poverty;
 - Education, training and Employment;
 - Family Strength;
 - Health.
- 1.4 The Early Help Strategy will make a significant contribution to the delivery of the corporate objectives: strengthening families where children are at risk; targeting effective early help and support will strengthen families, keep children and young people safe and improve their life chances; ensuring that children and families have swift and co-ordinated access to the right services at the right time; achieving positive and sustained change by working with the whole family; safely preventing family breakdown by supporting children and families

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Section 10 of the Children Act 2004 requires each local authority to make arrangements to promote cooperation between the authority, each of the authority's relevant partners and such other persons or bodies working with children in the local authority's area as the authority considers appropriate. The arrangements are to be made with a view to improving the well-being of all children in the authority's area, which includes protection from harm and neglect.
- 2.2 Working Together 2015 sets out the duty to provide Early Help "Local agencies should have in place effective ways to identify emerging problems and potential unmet needs for individual children and families. This requires all professionals, including those in universal services and those providing services to adults with children, to understand their role in identifying emerging problems and to share information with other professionals to support early identification and assessment".
- 2.3 There is considerable evidence from research that intervening early is effective in terms of preventing later difficulties in life. This means that it is also cost effective in terms of the use of resources, making fewer demands on specialist and higher cost services.

3.0 Early Help Strategy

- 3.1 The proposed Early Help Strategy, attached at Appendix 1, with Locality Partnerships at its heart, will put children first, ensuring they receive the integrated early help they need, as soon as it is required. In this model, as council services are increasingly having to focus on families with higher levels of need, an integrated offer will be developed with other partners taking an increasing role in meeting more common and less acute needs.
- 3.2 A vision for how the council and its partners work with children, young people and their families to offer support and interventions in a way that prevents the need for inappropriate specialist interventions, “Engaging with families as early as possible to enable them to provide a safe, stable and nurturing environment in which children and young people can thrive” is clearly set out within the document.
- 3.3 The strategy is a key element of our overall vision to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families and enable them to achieve their full potential. This will be achieved through ensuring support is put in place at the right time to meet a family’s needs prior to issues reaching crisis points. This support is usually lower level services that can also ensure that families can stay in control of resolving their issues and problems.
- 3.4 Examples of Early Help support includes; parenting support and skills building, connecting families to education, training, volunteering and employment opportunities, support and prevention for victims of domestic abuse.
- 3.5 The examples outlined above will be delivered through the proposed delivery model of ensuring:
 - Children, young people and their families are at the centre of the work.
 - Multi-agency approach.
 - Availability of Lead Professionals from across all agencies.
 - Joint working at the front door to encourage early help/intervention as a positive alternative to social care.
 - Clear step-up and down processes.
 - Co-location, co design, co delivery and joint commissioning wherever possible.
- 3.6 A programme of multi-agency learning and development will be delivered to strengthen and enhance the Early Help offer, and to build on the delivery of evidence based practice.
- 3.7 The success of the strategy will be directly measured against the outcomes experienced by children, young people and their families. By 2022 we will expect to see more families empowered, supported to take control of their lives and supporting each other in their local communities. However, a number of performance measures, aligned with the Children & Young People plan, will be used as proxy indicators of success.
- 3.8 The strategy will be implemented up until March 2022 with regular progress against the priorities being monitored by the Strengthening Families Board. The Children’s Trust board will hold overall responsibility for the implementation of the strategy and receive updates twice yearly.

4.0 Consultation Process and Results

- 4.1 A consultation process involving stakeholders has been completed the results of which have supported the commitment to Early Help to prevent later difficulties and interventions in the future.
- 4.2 Consultation with stakeholders, families and children & young people has, and continues to shape the strategy and its objectives. Feedback at various stages has led to a reduction in the length of the strategy, the development of a plan on a page and ensuring that the language used is meaningful to everyone who the strategy is intended for.
- 4.3 Partners have been widely consulted on the strategy and be involved in the co-production of it through a range of forums including Strengthening Families Board and Children's Trust Board.

5.0 Next Steps

- 5.1 Impact assessment will be an integral part of the continuing strategy development process. Ensuring all partners are playing their part in the delivery of the strategy is key to its success. Work will continue to develop the Troubled Families (Early Help) maturity model which will provide an overview of how well partners are working in the local area.
- 5.2 The Strengthening Families Board will develop a more detailed action plan to underpin the delivery of the priorities set out in section 12 of the strategy. Work will also continue to ensure engagement of families and children and young people in the delivery of the strategy.

6.0 Evaluation of alternative options

- 6.1 The alternative option to the proposed early help strategy is to continue with the current arrangements. However this is not recommended as it does not maximise or coordinate early help. There is a need to build on current early help activity and provide a clearer approach across the partnership that will improve effectiveness to ensure where appropriate, children and families access support at an earlier stage of need; and contribute to reducing pressure on the statutory child protection system.

7.0 Reason for decisions

- 7.1 The current Early Help Strategy is due to expire. The provision of early help is a nationally recognised, cost effective use of resources and an appropriate way to organise and manage the delivery of services. Wolverhampton City Council is the lead agency for early help through a partnership approach and joint responsibility under section 10 of the Children Act (2004) and restated in Working Together to Safeguard Children (2015). Whilst there are a number of national models, the proposed strategy aims to focus the early help arrangements in communities across the City and maximise the collective approach in all agencies.

8.0 Financial implications

- 8.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.
- 8.2 Should any costs arise in delivering the strategy then these will be contained within existing budgets within the Early Intervention Service.
[NM/09042018/A]

9.0 Legal implications

- 9.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.
[TC/10042018/K]

10.0 Equalities implications

- 10.1 Due consideration has been given to the extent to which the council has complied with its public equality duty and the need to eliminate discrimination and promote equality of opportunity. An initial Equality Impact screening exercise has been undertaken and at present it is anticipated that impacts will be positive. The equality of expectation for all children, including those that are disadvantaged, is a core value within all aspects of the Early Help Strategy.

11.0 Environmental implications

- 11.1 There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

12.0 Human resources implications

- 12.1 There are no human resources implications arising from this report.

13.0 Corporate landlord implications

- 13.1 There are no corporate landlord implications arising from this report.

14.0 Appendices

Appendix 1 - Early Help Strategy 2018-2022