

Report to: Lead Member for Children and Families

Date of meeting: 20 May 2019

By: Director of Children's Services

Title: Draft Children's Services Early Help Strategy

Purpose: To provide the Lead Member for Children and Families with the findings of the strategic commissioning review of Early Help Services for 0-19 year olds, and for the Lead Member to consider consulting on the draft Children's Services Early Help Strategy for a 10 week period May to July 2019.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Agree that the draft Children's Services Early Help Strategy will be consulted on for a 10 week period May to July 2019.
 2. Agree that 0-5 and education service providers may be contacted to explore their taking over children's centres affected by the proposals.
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1 Proposed Early Help Offer

1.1 Early help is about taking action to help families tackle their problems before they become more difficult to reverse. Without early help, family problems can become more complex and serious, sometimes leading to child safety concerns, and the need for statutory children's social care intervention. By reducing children and young people's experience of family problems, early help improves their outcomes in terms of safety, education, health and wellbeing.

1.2 We have developed a draft Early Help Strategy (EHS) through a detailed strategic commissioning review to help build stronger families in East Sussex. Based on the research and analysis completed, we are proposing to consult on a draft Strategy that would offer:

- Family keywork with families at risk of needing social care intervention, targeting the specific vulnerabilities that can escalate into crisis, such as parent mental ill health, substance misuse, and domestic violence.
- Short interventions with families at risk of needing social care intervention, where that is appropriate, to maximise the number of vulnerable families supported.
- Evidence-based and targeted family group work to support keywork and maximise the number of vulnerable families worked with.
- Evidence-based youth work with vulnerable young people, in support of keywork.

1.3 We would continue to deliver additional early help services on behalf of East Sussex County Council Public Health and external partners. Our services for families of 0-5 year olds will continue to be integrated with Health Visiting services. Access to services will be through a Single Point of Advice. It will be delivered in family homes, and through a network of 16 children's centres and youth centres, plus community venues as appropriate.

2 Supporting information

Findings of the strategic commissioning review of early help

2.1 In East Sussex, Children's Services Early Help includes family keywork, children's centres family support and youth work. These services are primarily targeted to the most vulnerable families and young people. We also subsidise preventative services which are jointly funded with partners, as part of a wider system of family support funded and offered by the public, private and third sectors.

2.2 The draft EHS is based on a robust assessment of the needs of residents of the county as a whole and within local communities. The draft outlines what is required from the service in future and how this can be delivered by focussing on outcomes rather than the existing service. The draft EHS is considered to be the most appropriate way to prioritise resources to meet the needs which have been identified at the current time and are expected in the medium term. The draft is attached at Appendix 1 to this report.

2.3 The draft EHS has identified the environment in which Children's Services Early Help is operating in terms of rising demand for services, the needs of families in this county, and the Council's priority outcomes. This included consideration of factors which may influence need in future, such as changes in population and levels of deprivation. The national and East Sussex policy context is included in Appendix 2, and the needs assessment is in Appendix 3.

2.4 The needs assessment found significant levels of need for early help across a broad spectrum of indicators. Over 4,000 families in the county are likely to need help to keep their children safe and healthy. Social and economic deprivation is strongly associated with need for early help services and 19 neighbourhoods in East Sussex are among the 10% most deprived in England. Evidence shows that the interrelated triggers of parent mental ill health, substance misuse, and domestic abuse cause escalating problems, leading to emotional abuse and neglect of children, and rising need for social care intervention. A quarter of child protection plans in East Sussex relate to domestic abuse, more than a third relate to parent drug misuse.

2.5 Family crises lead to adverse childhood experiences that can negatively affect life chances. Some measures of local children and young people's vulnerability are above regional and national average and rising. We estimate that there are 4,200 young carers in the county. Admissions of 0-4 year old children to hospital caused by unintentional and deliberate injuries are consistently higher than the region and England. Children and young people's mental health admissions are also higher than regional and national comparators. Violent crimes, sexual offences, public order offences and possession of weapons involving children aged 0-17 years increased 2015/16 to 2017/18 (by 7.4%, 4.2%, 5.8% and 11.6% respectively).

2.6 There is significant variation in the concentration of need across the county. The Needs Assessment has identified localities in Hastings, St Leonards and Bexhill, Rye, Eastbourne, Hailsham and Newhaven where more families need help. However, there are vulnerable families across the county, and the draft EHS seeks to ensure they can be supported.

2.7 Based on our analysis, we expect that needs for early help will continue to increase. Service data demonstrates rising demand in the form of referrals for early help. Economic conditions, high levels of deprivation and child poverty in some locations, put together with the shortage of affordable housing, create the context in which families are more likely to become vulnerable.

2.8 Detailed consideration of how best to meet local need for early help is included in service and options analyses in Appendices 4 and 5. The draft EHS draws on the evidence base for the most effective early help interventions, including national studies, research on high performing councils, local data on outcomes and feedback from families and young people who've received help. It takes into account an independent study which shows that 75% of family keywork in East Sussex prevents social care demand. Review of delivery models, including a market analysis, concluded that Children's Services is the only feasible provider of support to families at this higher level of risk. This combined evidence underpins a strategy that further targets in-house services to the vulnerabilities which lead to family crises and adverse childhood experiences.

2.9 The provision of early childhood services is part of the Council's general duty under the Childcare Act 2006 to improve the wellbeing of young children, and to reduce inequalities between them in the following areas:

- Physical and mental health and emotional well-being.
- Protection from harm and neglect.
- Education, training and recreation.
- The contribution made by them to society.
- Social and economic well-being.

2.10 In addition to this general duty, the Council is required to make arrangements to secure that the early childhood services in its area are provided in an integrated manner calculated to facilitate access and maximise the benefit of those services. In order to contribute to fulfilling these duties, the Act requires councils to make arrangements so that there are sufficient children's centres, so far as reasonably practicable, to meet local need and defines a children's centre as a place or a group of places through which early childhood services are made available (either by providing the services on site, or by providing advice and assistance on gaining access to services elsewhere); and at which activities for young children are provided.

2.11 In relation to services provided by children's centres, the Act places a further duty on councils, commissioners of local health and Jobcentre Plus to consider whether the early childhood services they provide should be provided through children's centres in the area. Lead Member will note that the core purpose of children's centres is described by the statutory guidance to the Childcare Act 2006, to which Lead Member must have due regard, as being to improve outcomes for young children and their families and to reduce inequalities between families in greatest need and their peers in terms of:

- Child development and school readiness.
- Parenting aspirations and parenting skills.
- Child and family health and life chances.

2.12 In addition to the duties under the Childcare Act 2006, the Children Act 2004 places upon the Council (and its partners) a responsibility to discharge its functions in such a way that it safeguards and promotes the welfare of children. The Children Act 1989 also requires the Council to safeguard and promote the welfare of children within their area who are in need; and, so far as is consistent with that duty, to promote the upbringing of such children

by their families, by providing a range and level of services appropriate to those children's needs.

Early Help Vision and Offer

2.13 Based on identified family needs in East Sussex and our analysis of effective interventions, the draft EHS proposes a vision that prioritises children's safety by targeting our resources. Children's Services would work with families at risk of needing social care, to tackle the triggers of crisis, at the right time and for the right duration, to build stronger families for the future. The vision includes flexibility, so that our services can take up funding opportunities where they support delivery of Council and service priorities, as described in the draft EHS in Appendix 1. It proposes to work in partnership with other Council services and across the public and third sectors, to ensure the best combined support to families.

2.14 The proposed service offer focuses on keywork support to the most vulnerable families and young people: those at risk of needing social care intervention. With the family's agreement, one Keyworker is allocated to work intensively with the family to help address their agreed needs. The Keyworker works with parents to build resilience and skills to help them look after their children. The draft EHS proposes that keywork be targeted to the triggers of family crisis, such as parent mental ill health issues, substance misuse and domestic abuse. To help manage demand and support as many vulnerable families as possible, keywork will use short interventions where appropriate.

2.15 Keywork will be supported by family group work and youth work, alongside or as an appropriate alternative to ongoing keywork. Family groups will improve parenting skills and resilience. We aim to support over 2,100 vulnerable families per year, rising to 2,300 if Troubled Family Programme funding continues. We also aim to support 500 vulnerable young people.

2.16 To access keywork and group services, families and professionals (such as doctors or teachers) working with families would continue to contact the Single Point of Advice, which would assess family needs and where appropriate refer for full assessment. Thorough assessment of all referred cases will continue with supervision and risk-based decision-making by experienced professionals, to minimise risks to children and young people's safety. Families not assessed as needing keywork will be signposted to the wider system of family support.

2.17 The wider system of family support offers information and services to all families. Information will continue to be available in children's centres, and we will continue to improve the Council's digital family support information. Families of 0-5 year olds will continue to access integrated support in children's centres, offered in partnership with Public Health and East Sussex Healthcare Trust. The wider system of support also includes school nurses, sources of legal, housing and parenting advice, national resources to support online safety and mental wellbeing, along with support on emotional and behavioural issues available to schools from Inclusion Special Educational Needs and Disability.

2.18 The draft EHS proposes a single service for families with children aged 0-19 years. The service would be provided jointly with universal Health Visiting services and the Healthy Child Programme, as now, to provide joined-up support to families with children aged 0-5 years, and for early identification of the most vulnerable families. Children's Services Early Help would be part of a seamless child safeguarding system with multi-agency safeguarding arrangements and social care services. It will operate a single information system. It will connect with processes for children and young people's emotional wellbeing and school behaviour.

2.19 We'll apply evidenced-based practice and improved evaluation of outcomes. We will continue our emphasis on professional practice training and development for our staff. Continuous improvement of our processes will maximise the time spent with families, and optimise our communication with partner organisations also working with vulnerable families. Partnership working will continue to maintain a coherent and integrated system. We will contribute to the work of East Sussex Children and Young People's Trust to improve the outcomes of children and young people vulnerable to poor outcomes, and to the Local Safeguarding Children Board to protect children and young people from harm.

Network of children's centres and youth centres

2.20 The draft EHS describes how services will be provided to local families and communities where they are needed. Keywork will usually be provided in family homes. Group and youth work will be provided in a network of children's centres and youth centres, plus other Council and community buildings as appropriate.

2.21 In terms of future children's centre provision, Lead Member will note that the statutory guidance to the Childcare Act 2006 provides that children's centres are as much about making appropriate integrated services available as about providing premises in particular geographical areas, however, councils should ensure that children's centres and their services are within reasonable reach of all families with young children in urban and rural areas, taking into account distance and availability of transport. The guidance also provides that councils should not close an existing children's centre site unless they can demonstrate that, where they decide to close a children's centre site, the outcomes for children, particularly the most disadvantaged, would not be adversely affected and that the starting point should therefore be a presumption against closure.

2.22 In order to identify the existing centres most suitable for provision of future services, a property analysis was carried out as included in Appendix 6. The analysis took into account accessibility and outcomes, considered degree of current use for Council and Health Visiting services, capacity to be part of a future network of children's centres and youth centres for keywork and other family support services, location in a high need locality or providing reach to rural areas, the feasibility of integrating services into nearby Council buildings, and value for money. 16 centres were identified as suitable to act as a network of centres for future services and are considered sufficient, so far as reasonably practicable, to meet local need, particularly in relation to ensuring that outcomes for the most disadvantaged children would not be adversely affected. In other locations, family keywork would continue in homes, youth work would continue in youth centres and community buildings as now, and children's centres family support would be provided in nearby Council or community buildings. Families would also have access to the wider system of support described above.

Expected outcomes

2.23 The draft EHS addresses identified needs and the four Council priorities. It will improve outcomes for the most vulnerable families by helping them help themselves. An analysis of the outcomes expected of the EHS, before public consultation, can be found in Appendix 8.

2.24 The draft EHS will support the most vulnerable families to tackle triggers of social care need, preventing escalation of risks and the requirement for social care intervention, enabling families to look after their children. It will improve vulnerable families' economic inclusion and financial resilience, and build parenting resilience so that families can keep their children safe and well.

2.25 For young people at risk of social care intervention, the draft EHS will increase school attendance, support online safety and young people's emotional and mental wellbeing, and it will reduce their risk of becoming victims of crime or exploitation.

Changes from current services

2.26 To enable the focus on most vulnerable families, the EHS would withdraw funding of lower level preventative services. This would lead to a reduction in management and admin support in children's centres, a reduction in the crèche offer within children's centres, and no longer subsidising two nurseries in Sidley and Egerton Park, Bexhill (this would require alternative providers to be identified as part of the consultation to maintain this provision). It would also include the relocation of services from the children's centres least suitable for future services. Finally, the draft EHS would withdraw from open access / non-targeted youth groups, unless external funding is available to cover the full costs.

2.27 The 14 children's centres which it is proposed are less suitable for future services are Hampden Park, Old Town (Eastbourne), The Bridge (Hastings), West St Leonards, Chailey, Newhaven, Ringmer, Seaford, Battle, Egerton Park (Bexhill), Rye, Crowborough, Heathfield, High Weald (Ticehurst). In all these locations, families would continue to receive keywork services in their homes from nearby keywork hubs. Family support services would also continue to be provided in all these communities, in nearby children's centres, Council buildings or community buildings. During public consultation, it is intended to seek expressions of interest from other organisations in a position to take over each of the 14 children's centres and offer 0-5 and/or education services to those communities. Should we not get suitable expressions of interest then the proposal is that these centres will close. Changes to the use of children's centres may oblige the relocation of private nurseries located in children's centres in Ticehurst, Crowborough and Seaford. Our implementation approach will seek to minimise any inconvenience for families.

2.28 An initial draft Outcomes Analysis and Equality Impact Assessment have been prepared to indicate the potential impact of proposals and mitigations. They are included in Appendices 7 and 8 to this report. These drafts suggest that impacts identified can be mitigated, in particular through work with partners.

Proposed consultation

2.29 The draft EHS and supporting analyses have drawn on the findings of service user, staff and partner consultation. We have discussed the review and future goals and challenges for early help with partners from public and third sectors in a wide range of forums, including the Children and Young People's Trust Conference in November 2018, along with discussions with service users through the Youth Cabinet and Children in Care Council. Through the proposed public consultation, we would seek to enhance our understanding of the effects of the draft EHS on service users, local families and communities, as well as inviting views and alternative ideas for best use of the available resources to meet families' needs and deliver Council priorities. As part of the consultation we'll talk to 0-5 and education service providers to explore opportunities to take over centres. Following public consultation, the Outcomes Analysis and Equality Impact Assessment will be updated, to support Members in decision-making about future services, including giving due regard to the duties and objectives set out in section 149 of *The Equality Act, 2010*.

2.30 It is recommended that a public consultation on the proposals in the draft EHS be undertaken from May to July 2019. During the consultation period, we would engage with all the relevant stakeholders including schools, Local Children's Safeguarding Board, Clinical Commissioning Groups, East Sussex Better Together, voluntary sector forums, Youth Cabinet and the Children in Care Council, to ensure they are given the opportunity to

comment on the draft proposals. Particular attention will also be given to ensuring that disadvantaged families and minority groups participate in the consultation.

Financial Analysis

2.31 Early Help currently had a net revenue budget in 2018/2019 of £6.8m, consisting of £5.8m staffing costs (258 full time equivalents), and £1.0m non-staffing costs. The evidence based, targeted approach and smart use of assets proposed in the EHS can be delivered with a budget of £4.2m.

2.32 The estimated budget saving related to the proposed transfer or if necessary closure of 14 children’s centres to other providers is over £0.7m.

Childrens Centre	Estimated saving (average net running costs inc staffing and overheads) (£000)
Battle	12
Chailey	19
Crowborough	22
Egerton	91
Hampden Park	54
Heathfield	14
High Weald	17
Newhaven	14
Old Town	3
Ringmer	19
Rye	24
Seaford	16
West St Leonards	19
The Bridge - rent 18/19	2
Total	326
Support staff costs	394
Total saving	720

2.33 The transfer of children’s centres is not subject to SureStart grant clawback conditions if centres are transferred to providers of services for 0-5 years. Through public consultation, we aim to identify transfers to appropriate service providers of 0-5 and education services, engaging proactively with existing interested providers in the local area. The proposed alternative service providers will be presented along with a confirmed clawback liability, and any costs of transfer, in support of decision-making about future services.

2.34 As a result of the draft Strategy, £2.6m savings would be achievable by Children’s Services Early Help by 2020/21. These would be made through reductions in staffing and premises costs. The Medium Term Financial Plan includes savings of £1m from Children’s Services Early Help by 2020/21. Additional savings of £1.6m were delayed from 2018/19 to ensure they were made on an evidenced basis through the detailed review.

	2018/19 £m	2019/20 £m	2020/21 £m	Total £m
Savings in Medium Term Financial Plan	1.6	-	1.0	2.6
Savings from proposals	*	0.6	2.0	2.6
Cumulative difference	-1.6	-1.0	-	-

* Saving temporarily mitigated elsewhere in 2018/2019

2.35 In delivering the draft EHS, Children's Services will seek to increase grant funding bids for early help activity, in partnership with public sector partners and the third sector as appropriate, to support a broader preventative offer, where this supports Council priorities. In addition, the Council has significantly increased its lobbying work in the last year both directly to the Government and with our local, neighbouring and national partners to lobby Government. We will continue lobbying the Government for a permanent and sustainable funding solution for local government which takes account of demography and the real needs of local people and which does not place the whole funding burden on local taxpayers and businesses. This will focus on the Comprehensive Spending Review and Fair Funding Review, including the need to ensure the new Children's formula element of the Fair Funding Formula is aligned with our assessment of need. We will continue supporting the Local Government Association's Bright Futures campaign for a sustainable funding settlement for children's social care, and we will press for a third Troubled Families Programme which targets the drivers of social care demand.

Early Help Member Panel

2.36 The Early Help Review Panel was established to provide critical challenge to the detailed review process and development of the draft EHS. It was formed of Members from the Children's Scrutiny Committee initially, with revised membership following the establishment of the People Scrutiny Committee. It will have met 4 times between March 2018 and May 2019. It will consider the draft EHS and supplementary documents and its comments and views will be presented when the matter is considered for decision.

One Council and Working with Partners

2.37 A One Council approach was taken to the Children's Services Early Help review. The Review Board included representatives of all departments, and engaged with a wider cohort of stakeholders from across the Council, to help ensure that the draft EHS is the best combined offer the Council as a whole can make to families who need support. In particular, the draft EHS has been developed in close coordination with Public Health to maintain the integrated early intervention offer for 0-5 year olds, in partnership with East Sussex Healthcare Trust. This ensures a holistic offer to new parents, while early years contact is also key to identifying families at risk of needing social care intervention. Informed by our engagement with partners, the draft EHS also includes an ambition of more effective fundraising in collaboration with other early help providers in the public and voluntary sector.

3. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

3.1 This report recommends consulting on a draft EHS which will cost £4.2m and which targets support to the most vulnerable families and young people in East Sussex, through evidence-based interventions which will improve their resilience and outcomes, thereby

preventing the need for social care services. It is considered to be the most appropriate prioritisation of resources in order to meet identified need.

3.2 The draft EHS is focussed on the localities where the most vulnerable families live, but offers a countywide service. Keywork would take place in family homes supported from a network of 16 children's centres and youth centres offering reach into rural inland areas. Group and youth work would also be offered to increase the number of families we can work with, and would be provided wherever need was identified, in the network of children's centres and youth centres, or using other Council or community buildings in local areas. The EHS targets families at risk of needing social care intervention, but continues to work in partnership to enable a wider preventative offer, including the integrated family support and Health Visiting services for 0-5 year olds.

3.3 It is recommended the draft EHS would undergo a public consultation during May to July 2019, following which the findings would be analysed and the draft EHS and supporting appendices, including the Equality Impact Assessment, would be finalised and updated proposals presented for decision in October 2019. If approved, the updated proposals would take effect by 1 April 2020.

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LOCAL MEMBERS

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Cllr Jim Sheppard

Cllr Richard Stogdon

Cllr Simon Elford

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Cllr John Barnes

Cllr Sarah Osborne

Cllr John Ungar

Cllr Phillip Daniel

Cllr Kieth Glazier

Cllr Phil Boorman

Cllr Matthew Beaver

Cllr Tania Charman

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Draft Children's Services Early Help Strategy

Appendix 2 National and East Sussex Context

Appendix 3 Needs Assessment

Appendix 4 Service Analysis

Appendix 5 Options Analysis

Appendix 6 Property Analysis

Appendix 7 Outcomes Analysis (Draft)

Appendix 8 Equality Impact Assessment (Draft)