

**EARLY HELP STRATEGY**

**To:** Children and Young People Committee

**Meeting Date:** 9 February 2016

**From:** Adrian Loades, Executive Director: Children, Families and Adults Services  
and  
Sarah Ferguson, Service Director: Enhanced and Preventative Services

**Electoral division(s):** ALL

**Forward Plan ref:** N/A                      **Key decision:** No

**Purpose:** To present the Early Help Strategy for Cambridgeshire, the core principles for joint early help work and the role of the County Council.

**Recommendation:** It is recommended that the Committee agrees the Early Help Strategy, the core principles for joint early help and the role of the County Council in delivering them.

<b><i>Officer contact:</i></b>	
Name:	Sarah Ferguson
Post:	Service Director: Enhanced and Preventative Services
Email:	<a href="mailto:sarah.ferguson@cambridgeshire.gov.uk">sarah.ferguson@cambridgeshire.gov.uk</a>
Tel:	01223 729099

## **1.0 BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 The Cambridgeshire Early Help Strategy sets out how public services for children, young people and their families will work together to provide and facilitate early help for families. The key theme within the Strategy is that this professional early help offer should not be separate from all the support that children and families receive from within their community, from informal networks of support and from the voluntary sector. This Strategy is about a partnership between the public sector and the public, working together. The Strategy will support and enable the development and implementation of a renewed early help offer in Cambridgeshire. The draft Strategy is attached as Appendix 1.

## **2.0 DEVELOPING THE STRATEGY**

- 2.1 The financial position of the County Council and its partners, coupled with rising need and a growing population make it necessary to review our early help support arrangements and approach and seek different solutions with partners and communities.
- 2.2 We have been working with partners across the early help system to develop an Early Help Strategy for Cambridgeshire. The work began in 2014 with the publication of a discussion document and a series of early help stakeholder workshops. The development of an Early Help Strategy was presented to the CYP Committee in June 2014 and the Children's Trust in July 2014. The principles in the emerging strategy have been used to inform the 2014-16 reconfiguration of Enhanced and Preventative Services. During Autumn 2014 work on the Strategy stalled due to work pressures from both business planning and the Enhanced and Preventative Services review.
- 2.3 In 2015 work to progress the Strategy was restarted. The Strategy has been reviewed by the CFA Management Team and the Next Steps Board. In July 2015 the Cambridgeshire Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) confirmed agreement to the core principles of the Strategy. We are planning to take the final draft of the Strategy to the LSCB early in 2016 for endorsement, and for the LSCB to act as the lead partnership group with oversight of the Strategy.

## **3.0 EARLY HELP IN CAMBRIDGESHIRE**

- 3.1 Early Help' refers to preventative and early intervention support provided to families which is aimed at stopping problems deepening, avoiding crises and ultimately reducing the demand for specialist and statutory intervention services.
- 3.2 Early help is provided by all partners working across the children's system, which includes safeguarding, family functioning, family health and mental health, work to support inclusion, educational achievement, special educational needs, further learning and employment prospects and issues such as poverty, offending and substance misuse. County Council early help services are led primarily (but not exclusively) within the Enhanced and Preventative Services Directorate and include the multi-disciplinary Locality Teams, Children's Centres, SEND Specialist Services, Youth Support Services and the Family Intervention Partnership.

- 3.3 The early help offer in Cambridgeshire is strong, with good services underpinned by well-developed collaborative working arrangements, including the Common Assessment Framework (CAF), Model of Staged Intervention (MOSI), Information Sharing Agreements, joint workforce development, Together for Families partnership and Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). However, the economic climate, population growth and changing demographics mean that families are facing new and greater challenges at the same time that all public services are facing decreasing budgets and change on an unprecedented scale. This context makes it necessary to review our early help arrangements and approach and seek different solutions across organisations and with communities.

#### **4.0 DEVELOPING A NEW PARTNERSHIP APPROACH TO EARLY HELP – ALONGSIDE FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES**

- 4.1 The Early Help Strategy consolidates a number of strands of work and seeks to readdress the balance of public agencies stepping in to provide services and a greater reliance on identifying the strengths and capacity within families and communities. We want to maximise the effectiveness of our local and strategic partnerships, align our work across organisations to achieve greatest impact. We need to focus on building the capacity within families and local communities, helping people to help themselves.
- 4.2 The approach is predicated on an assumption that most children do well in the protective environment of their families, communities and schools. It should be a role of public bodies to facilitate good local support networks and create communities which are making good connections with and for families.
- 4.3 The overarching objectives and outcome for early help are to:
- Address emerging needs in families before they reach crisis point
  - Build the confidence, skill and capacity of families so they can succeed independent of public services
  - Help build and make most use of the range of early help available in communities, supporting the voluntary and community sector to thrive and local people to come together
  - Reduce the demand on specialist public, voluntary and community sector services
  - Ensure children and young people are ready for and attend school; make expected progress and go on to have the skills, qualifications and opportunities to succeed in the employment market.
- 4.4 The Strategy provides a framework for a partnership approach to early help. The Strategy considers the key features of an effective early help system to be:
- Taking a Think Family approach
  - Using and building the capacity within communities
  - A focus on strengths and independence
  - Aligned and seamless support from across public services

These features are detailed in the Strategy ([Appendix 1](#), page 9-13).

- 4.5 Illustrative examples of what this approach will mean in practice for families include:

- Families with complex needs who receive support from public services will have a lead professional to facilitate coordinated support.
  - Linking new parents or those who are struggling, to support groups run by other local parents who have the confidence and time to help.
  - Peer support for a parent providing regular contact and supported introductions to local the local Children's Centre and other voluntary group, with support from a professional as required.
  - Networks of families of children with special educational needs or disabilities running trips and events as well as sharing experiences and coping strategies.
  - Support from voluntary sector organisations tackling issues such as social isolation, family debt management, adolescent behaviour difficulties, substance misuse, depression and anxiety.
  - Involvement in time banking schemes bringing the capacity, skills and time of local people together.
  - Improved identification of families needing early help and facilitated support before problems get worse.
  - The Early Support Programme will identify families with children with complex and lifelong disabilities at an early age and ensures that support services are coordinated around them.
  - Budget holding lead professionals will enable families to have greater control over available resources to meet their needs in a more creative and effective way.
- 4.6 The LSCB has commissioned work to help articulate what 'good' early help looks like, as an addendum to the Early Help Strategy. Further discussions across the partnership will provide an evaluation framework for early help, and some mechanism for assessing progress across the system.
- 4.7 Implementing these ideas and developing a community-led model will need to be a partnership endeavour. Community development and leadership is already undertaken across partners and there are potentially opportunities to join up these arrangements and capacity to maximise its effectiveness. Discussions are underway across partnership organisations about how these collaborations can continue to be developed. It will be beneficial to consider how adult, family and children's services organised at a local level could work more closely alongside District Council community development functions where they exist. Similarly, as we look to ensure that physical community resources are fully exploited, looking to how our services are aligned more fully could bring efficiencies and a more joined up approach to community facing services.

## **5 ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES**

### **5.1 Developing the local economy for the benefit of all**

- 5.1.1 The early help offer is strongly linked to the Breaking the Cycle strategy for tackling child and family poverty and economic disadvantage and multi-agency efforts to support families to overcome deprivation, find work, manage debt and address other economic issues. Additionally there are links to the Accelerating Achievement Strategy which aims to help children from deprived economic backgrounds to succeed in education.

## **5.2 Helping people live healthy and independent lives**

- 5.2.1 Supporting independent and healthy communities less reliant on public services is a central goal of early help. These goals compliment the County Council Community Resilience Strategy.

## **5.3 Supporting and protecting vulnerable people**

- 5.3.1 The proposals retain a strong focus on preventative support for the most vulnerable groups in our communities and early involvement to prevent problems getting worse. However we must also recognise that these proposals represent a significant reduction in the budget for early help and that this will impact on our ability to provide protection and improve outcomes.

## **6.0 SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS**

### **6.1 Resource Implications**

- 6.1.1 The overall level of resource to deliver direct County Council early help services is being significantly reduced. A review of Enhanced and Preventative Services is in process, the revised service will aim to deliver the greatest possible impact for children and families within this smaller available budget. The resource reductions will have an impact on the amount of early intervention and preventative support provided and will need to be targeted to minimise any increased demand for specialist, acute and intensive services such as Children's Social Care Services.
- 6.1.2 This reduction in resources is replicated across partner organisations and we should recognise that public services provided by partner organisations will be unable to employ as many practitioners and work directly with as many children and families as previously. The suggested focus therefore is on building resilient communities with networks of support based more on the existing strengths of local people and less on the intervention of services. All opportunities to align discussions about budget reductions should be seized proactively. We must ensure we maximise the effectiveness of our local and strategic partnerships, aligning our work across organisations to achieve the greatest impact.

### **6.2 Statutory, Risk and Legal Implications**

- 6.2.1 The proposals have not identified any areas where the County Council will be unable to meet statutory requirements, but we should recognise that the overall reductions will put pressure on our performance in statutory service areas and require us to deliver differently. Early Help services have statutory duties to make a full children's centre offer, promote school attendance, safeguard vulnerable children, support educational inclusion and help young people into further learning and work amongst others. For example, budget reductions could impact on the numbers of young people who are Not in Education Employment and Training (NEET).
- 6.2.2 The particular risk is that many early help services are non-statutory and therefore more vulnerable at a time of considerable financial pressure. However, reducing early help services carries the risk of needs escalating, creating greater problems for families and subsequently increasing demand for higher cost, statutory services. We will need to be far more creative in

working with the capacity that already exists.

- 6.2.3 There is a risk that community capacity and resilience is not adequately developed. This work is being taken forward through the Building Community Resilience Programme.

### **6.3 Equality and Diversity Implications**

- 6.3.1 There will be a reduction in the number of families public services will be able to work with as our services become more targeted. Community impact assessments have been completed for the range of Early Help services (attached as Appendix 2).

### **6.4 Engagement and Consultation Implications**

- 6.4.1 Significant engagement and consultation activity has taken place to develop current proposals. In June 2014 the outline proposals for the strategy were presented to committee, since then the strategy has been discussed widely with partners including the Children's Trust and LSCB.
- 6.4.2 Consultation is currently ongoing on the proposed changes to Early Help services within Enhanced and Preventative, the results from the formal consultation on the re-commissioning of Early Help services will be published in February 2016.

### **6.5 Localism and Local Member Involvement**

- 6.5.1 The strategic direction detailed in the Early Help strategy is closely aligned with the localism agenda and the empowerment of communities to do more for themselves. It recognises the vital role that local people, community groups and voluntary and community sector organisations play in providing preventative support and commits the local authority to a role which seeks to maximise, facilitate and stimulate the contributions from these groups. The strategy includes specific investment in capacity to play this community leadership role, exploring opportunities to link the community work done by different organisations together.
- 6.5.2 The strategy envisages a vital role for local members as community leaders, engaging with local people, hearing their priorities, aspirations and needs and providing the link back to both public services and community-based support.

### **6.6 Public Health Implications**

- 6.6.1 Public Health support is a vital component of early help, including in particular community health and mental health teams, drug and alcohol services, the role of GPs and other universal health teams. Public Health has been engaged in the development of the partnership strategy. Opportunities to align working arrangements, for example between health visiting teams and Children's Centre staff are being explored.

Source Documents	Location
Early Help Strategy	Appendix 1
Community Impact Assessment	Appendix 2
Formal consultation on the Recommissioning of Early Help Services.	<a href="http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/info/20076/children_and_families_practitioners_and_providers_information/370/providing_children_and_families_services/8">http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/info/20076/children_and_families_practitioners_and_providers_information/370/providing_children_and_families_services/8</a>
Stronger Together - Cambridgeshire County Council's Strategy for Building Resilient Communities	<a href="http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/4176/community_resilience_strategy.pdf">http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/4176/community_resilience_strategy.pdf</a>