

Subject:	Brighton & Hove Draft Early Help Strategy	
Date of Meeting:	14 October 2013	
Report of:	Pinaki Ghoshal, Executive Director, Children's Services	
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Ward(s) affected:	All	

FOR GENERAL RELEASE**1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:**

- 1.1 In Brighton & Hove we believe that Early Help supports the widespread recognition that it is better to identify and deal with problems early rather than respond when difficulties have become acute and demand action by services which often are less effective and more expensive. Although research shows that the most impact can be made during a child's early years, Early Help is not just for very young children, as problems may occur at any point throughout childhood and adolescence. '..... providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life, from the foundation years through to the teenage years.' (Working Together 2013).
- 1.2 We believe in preventing problems occurring by building resilience and reducing risk factors via universal and Early Help services. Universal services are essentially a broad set of support which aims to increase the protective factors and decrease the risk factors facing children, young people and families. It refers to the complex mix of individual, family, community factors which combine to keep individuals safe and well, and for any problems or concerns to be tackled informally and quickly, without the need for more specialist support.
- 1.3 This early help strategy and all actions that come out of it will support the whole partnership of children's services to work together to refocus our activity on Early Help and reduce the need for use of high cost specialist services.
- 1.4 Public services often refer to 'universal or open access' services, which are available to all, and which can provide advice, guidance and low level support to families when they need it. This is often about single issue problems and can often be resolved through information, talking to someone or attending a training course or open access programme. There is usually no referral route. There may be information collected on numbers attending or accessing courses or programmes, and data on wider population outcomes is measured e.g. public health programmes such as immunisation.
- 1.4 Examples of universal services include:

- Health visitors and the range of advice and support provided to families
 - Children’s Centres and their general programmes
 - Schools and the management of low level attendance or behavioural issues and a curriculum that develops confident individuals who are able to live safe, healthy and fulfilling lives
 - Open access youth provision such as youth clubs or wider activity such as leisure centres and libraries
 - Immunisation, screening and weight management programmes by school nurses
- 1.5 Early Help is putting in place actions to address an issue that has been identified related to an individual child and its family as soon as possible to stop things getting worse. Early Help is about stopping problems escalating. It relies on early identification of difficulties and early action which is targeted and evaluated. It can involve intensive intervention or lighter touch support, and is usually based on a clear support plan, with identified actions, responsibilities and outcomes, which is then regularly reviewed and updated as necessary. Early intervention is a form of targeted activity, with a specific action being put in place to address a specific issue or combination of issues. It therefore forms part of a continuum of activity in supporting families.
- 1.6 Examples of Early Help services include:
- Family coaching by Stronger Families Stronger Communities e.g. practical support to improve family resilience
 - Targeted support by health services e.g. support provided by health visitors for mothers suffering from post natal depression
 - Targeted support by youth services e.g. coaching and mentoring via one to one and group support
 - Targeted support by schools e.g. additional support provided for issues captured via vulnerable pupil register
 - Targeted support by community and voluntary sector organisations e.g. advice and guidance regarding housing support
- 1.7 The idea of universal and Early Help is therefore a simple one: by working together with children and families we can prevent issues occurring and deal with them more effectively when they do. Our strategy is based upon the fundamental importance of multi-agency working to identify, assess and deliver universal and targeted services to reduce specific problems from getting worse and becoming deep seated or entrenched. This requires a focus on the development of an integrated approach and a strategy for workforce development.
- 1.8 Although there are many good examples of effective Early Help and universal services in Brighton and Hove, there are gaps and pressures which need to be addressed through a new strategy that is adopted by all those working with children and families across the city.
- 1.9 When Ofsted inspects the local authority it will consider a number of elements which will include how schools and other providers ensure that they are making an effective contribution to early identification, help and support for children and young people. A “significant element” of the inspection will be a judgement about the ‘effectiveness of local professionals (including schools) working together to identify children and young people who may be at risk , offering early help and ,

where appropriate managing this without any necessary need for formal referral to children's social care service.'

- 1.3 This Early Help Strategy will enable us to shift the balance of provision towards early identification of issues and away from seeking to solve problems when it may be too late. We still recognise there is a need for specialist services and that there are families where specialist intervention and support are necessary however by identifying issues earlier and providing appropriate support we will look to ensure that problems do not become entrenched.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 The Draft Early Help strategy will be shared with all partners as part of an extensive consultation.
- 2.2 That the Committee considers and comments upon the Draft Early Help Strategy.
- 2.3 A final version of strategy will be launched and agreed in November.
- 2.4 The strategy will be supported by an action plan with key milestones that will be monitored. By the Children & Young People's Partnership Forum, annual reports on progress will be presented to the Children's Committee.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 Appendix: Draft Early Help Strategy

4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

The strategy is being funded by the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) in 2013/14. £60k permanent funding has been identified to fund a co-ordinator and admin support, as well as £360k temporary funding for groups of schools to bid for this funding for projects/family coaches to support the strategy. Other support is available to support this from existing services that are funded from existing budgets – for example the Youth Service, health service and Stronger Families Stronger Communities.

- 5.1 *Finance Officer Consulted: Andy Moore Date: 11/09/13*

Legal Implications:

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

- 5.2 *Lawyer Consulted: Serena Kynaston Name Date: 13/09/2013*

Equalities Implications:

In the writing of this strategy due regard has been shown to the protected groups under the Equality Act 2010. We recognise that members of these groups may at times have a particular need for early help interventions and support. Our vision and approach for Early Help states the commitment to our duties under the Equality Act to show due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. We will equality impact assess activities and action plans arising from this strategy.

- 5.3 Sustainability Implications: N/A

- 5.4 Crime & Disorder Implications: N/A

- 5.5 Risk and Opportunity Management Implications: N/A

- 5.6 Public Health Implications: N/A

5.7 Corporate / Citywide Implications:

6. **EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):**

6.1 N/A

7. **REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Brighton & Hove Draft Early Help Strategy 2013-2017