

Local Members Interest
N/A

Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Tuesday 19 July 2022

Early Help Strategy 2022 - 2025

Recommendation(s)

I recommend that the Committee:

- a. Review and Scrutinise the refreshed Early Help Strategy
- b. Provide feedback on the Early Help Strategy so that this can be considered ahead of Cabinet

Summary

1. The Local Authority recognises that Early Help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later. As part of Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) they make it clear that 'Early help means 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.'
2. Effective early help relies upon local organisations and agencies working together to:
 - a. identify children and families who would benefit from early help
 - b. undertake an assessment of the need for early help
 - c. provide targeted early help services to address the assessed needs of a child and their family which focuses on activity to improve the outcomes for the child.
3. As a local authority we have responsibility to promote interagency working and co-operation to improve the welfare of all children and the first step in doing this is developing a partnership strategy.
4. Staffordshire has had an Early Help Strategy for some time and this is a new version which has been developed as a partnership to meet the needs of families locally. Families' feedback and views on the effectiveness of Early Help were instrumental in helping us develop this document.
5. We ask that scrutiny consider the strategy in that context and provide any feedback that they may feel relevant and add value to the development of this strategy.

Report

Background

6. We have had an Early Help Strategy in place since 2015 and have made excellent progress delivering much needed early help to Staffordshire children, young people, and families, supporting them to achieve better outcomes. This has been evidenced through our commitment to the Supporting Families known locally as Building Resilient Families and Communities (BRFC).
7. However, it is time now to refresh the strategy to appreciate local and national change, focusing on the current opportunities and challenges that we face. There is an even greater need for early help since the first strategy was produced the Covid-19 pandemic has seen a widening of existing inequalities across society and now more than ever we need a partnership response to help local families.

Participation and Engagement

8. The strategy has been refreshed through our Early Help Operational Group, underpinning our joint commitment to delivering the Strategy. Each partner seeing local Early Help as everyone's responsibility. This Group are also developing the linked Delivery Plan to ensure that the Strategy is fully realised and further developed.
9. We engaged children, young people, and families in the development of this strategy to seek their views on Early Help. They told us:
 - a. They like working with us when they are treated as individual with high challenge, high support.
 - b. They want more information that is clear on where to go and who to talk to when they are in need.
 - c. Parents want face to face meetings to ensure that parents feel they are being supported.
 - d. The language we use is important. Make sure it is user friendly with no jargon or abbreviations.
 - e. Access for all parents requesting help and support could be easier.
 - f. Families want to repeat their stories less.
 - g. They want support when they ask for it and often find they wait too long for the help and support that they need.

This feedback has informed the Early Help Strategy we have prepared and the ongoing development of our Delivery Plan.

Link to Strategic Plan

10. The Strategic Plan provides a clear direction for Staffordshire County Council:



Staffordshire County Council

Vision: An innovative, ambitious and sustainable county, where everyone has the opportunity to prosper, be healthy and happy

Outcomes	Priorities	How we work
<p>Everyone in Staffordshire will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have access to more good jobs and share the benefits of economic growth Live in thriving and sustainable communities Be healthier and independent for longer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support Staffordshire's economy to grow, generating more and better-paid jobs Tackle climate change, enhance our environment, and make Staffordshire more sustainable Encourage good health and wellbeing, resilience and independence Fix more roads, and improve transport and digital connections Offer every Staffordshire child and young person the best start in life, and the chance to achieve their potential 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage our communities to help themselves and each other Lead our workforce to be ambitious, courageous and empowered Use digital technology and data to connect, inform and support the people of Staffordshire Engage and listen to our communities, partners and business, working together to improve our county

Pledge: Live within our means and deliver value for money

11. This strategy contributes to all three outcomes and the plan will embed the ways of working. The strategy supports us particularly to meet the economic, health and wellbeing and best start priorities.

Link to Other Overview and Scrutiny Activity

12. Family Hubs

Community Impact

13. It is envisaged that this strategy will have a positive impact on the community providing greater focus on early help will stop problems escalating. A full impact assessment will be concluded prior to Cabinet.

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

[Supporting Families: Early Help System Guide](#)

Department for Education/Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

Published 2 April 2022

[Working Together 2018](#)

Department for Education

Published 26 March 2015 and updated 9 December 2020.

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