

<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>Health and wellbeing board</b>
<b>Meeting date:</b>	<b>19 July 2016</b>
<b>Title of report:</b>	<b>Early help strategy</b>
<b>Report by:</b>	<b>Head of children's commissioning</b>

## **Classification**

Open

## **Key decision**

This is not an executive decision.

## **Wards affected**

Countywide

## **Purpose**

To provide assurance that the early help strategy (attached at appendix 1) is aligned and fulfils the aims and priorities of the health and wellbeing board strategy.

## **Recommendation(s)**

That the health and wellbeing board comment and endorse the early help strategy to deliver the priorities of the health and wellbeing strategy

## **Alternative options**

1. The alternative option to the proposed early help strategy is to continue with the current arrangements. However this is not viable as it does not maximise or coordinate early help in Herefordshire; and has contributed to a higher number of referrals through the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). Many of these are inappropriate to be dealt with at the level 4, threshold of need. Herefordshire has experienced higher comparative levels of child protection referrals and increased number of looked after children. The current system is 'overheated' resulting in extra activity, a greater level of intrusive work with parents and families than is ideally required, and higher costs to partners and the council. There is a need to provide an alternative structure and process that will allow for referrals to be handled at the correct level and to meet the family's needs effectively.
2. In considering alternative solutions to this issue, 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. Whilst there are a number of national models, the proposed strategy aims to develop service and budget arrangements that best suit Herefordshire, to focus the early help service arrangements in communities across the county and maximise the collective approach.

## Reasons for recommendations

3. The early help strategy will play a key role in securing outcomes set out in the children and young people's plan 2015-2018 and contribute to meeting the expected commitments to the troubled families (families first) programme; and contribute to Herefordshire's health and wellbeing strategy.
4. The development of the children and young people's partnership's early help strategy is at a time of increased financial pressures on all agencies and organisations, including early year's settings, schools, colleges, NHS, public and mental health services, police as well as the council's children and adults' services. At the same time there is an increased pressure on resources, with higher numbers entering health and social care settings; recognising that the current levels of MASH and child protection referrals and the number of looked after children are at an 'overheated' level. These significant cost pressures, with capped budgets that need to be absorbed, mean the current resourcing is not sustainable.
5. To make the sustainable changes that will have an impact on these numbers and incurred costs, there is a need to maximise an early help approach that will enable effective, early work that will not only achieve 'best value', but will facilitate and influence communities and partners to provide effective and coordinated evidenced-based help and support to children and their families at the earliest opportunity. It will rebalance resources across Herefordshire's multi-agency services to enable sustainable service provision that will benefit families.

## Key considerations

6. The early help strategy is priority one of the children and young people's plan 2015-2018 and underpins all other aspects of the plan. It has the aim to provide early and effective help and support to children and families when they need it, with the long term aim of helping families in Herefordshire to be able to help themselves and improve their overall wellbeing and quality of life. In order to be able to help and support children and their families at the earliest stage, the range of core partners who form the health and wellbeing board, will need to commit to the early help strategy and work together to plan and deliver services. Strong partnerships that understand the role each agency plays and the impact each service has on supporting families will be essential.
7. The strategy will have a community focussed approach that recognises the importance of the communities in which families live and work and developing and building relationships based on the family's links within their community. Acknowledging also that a rebalancing of resources across Herefordshire's multi-agency services must occur in order to create a sustainable service provision that will benefit families. This approach will provide effective step up and step down systems and processes using universal services and building on the community resources and capacity to:
  - organise and access help themselves through and with their local communities
  - enable communities to help themselves
  - fundamentally improve the way that services are identified and delivered to the county's most vulnerable children and their families

- build upon existing provision to ensure a more robust and coordinated range of early help services across the county that are easier to navigate for both families and practitioners
  - maximise a multi-disciplinary/multi-agency approach to family help
8. The implementation and operation of the Early Help strategy will be governed through the multi-agency children and young people's partnership executive group. Developments and progress will be reported bi-annually through a scorecard which will track quantitative and qualitative outcomes as outlined in the strategy document. The focus of this work will be towards the outcomes achieved for each family and how those outcomes align with the key indicators of each agency's targets along with the cost-effectiveness of programmes of support. The joint and integrated approach will provide clearer access for families to support and services. Alongside which will be an integration of data to enable the identification of gaps in provision but also identifying where support services are improving the wellbeing of families.

## Community impact

9. The early help strategy will build on and be dependent on the identification and engagement of community resources in each locality. It has a focus on four of the seven key priorities of the health and wellbeing strategy:
- Giving every child the best start in life
  - Helping vulnerable children and families
  - Empowering communities to take better care of themselves
  - Improving mental wellbeing throughout their lives
10. It is intended that the early help strategy and support will be integrated and provided through community resources, adapting to each locality's needs. In practice this means that we will enable children and families to access information, advice and guidance and support them through their own network of contacts, through their local community resources, and through contact with public and private services; to support children and families to work with services to assess their needs and determine the best way to meet them.
11. This will require engagement with communities and community organisations across the county, which is underway through consultation work with the council's children's wellbeing and adults and wellbeing directorates and the design council community engagement project. The feedback from this will inform how early help services will be developed and local organisations and inter-agency services might be harnessed to deliver the early help support. It will also identify where there are gaps to inform the partnership commissioning arrangements.

## Equality duty

12. The early help strategy will pay due regard to our public sector equality duty and the attached equality impact assessment attached at appendix 2 will ensure that we have considered and paid due regard to the need to -
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct ... prohibited by or under this Act;
  - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
  - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected

characteristic and persons who do not share it."

## **Financial implications**

13. There are no financial implications of the strategy.
14. As part of the early help strategy there will be a re-alignment of service arrangements in the children's wellbeing and adults and wellbeing directorates and with partners to a more community focussed, locality based approach.
15. The strategy will also play a key role in meeting the expected commitments to the troubled families (families first) programme, which will provide key funding to the council and the children and young people's partnership over the period 2015-2020. The troubled families programme in Herefordshire, on agreeing to and meeting the troubled families' outcomes, will attract a combination of payments from the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG). This is made up of attachment fees for each identified family, an annual transformation grant and a payment by results, amounting to a potential £2.276m by 2020 (this figure based on 1,090 families x £1000/family + transformation grant, £150,000 x 5 + achieving an estimated 50% payment by results against the 1,090 target number). Through the use of the DCLG's troubled families cost calculator, we will also be able to calculate and identify the achieved costs avoided across the partnership as a result of the work of the troubled families programme within the early help strategy. For example through identifying reduced number of police call-outs, improving children's school attendance and adults and young people moving into sustained training or employment.

## **Legal implications**

16. The working together to safeguard children 2013 statutory guidance supports the importance of early help to ensure that problems for children and families are identified early and responded to effectively as soon as possible.

## **Risk management**

17. The risks to consider in implementing the early help strategy include:
  - The length of time it will take to engage partners in this early help model. To align and integrate with each agency's early help provision and achieve the desired positive impact in the communities with an identified improvement in the number of families worked with at the appropriate level of need. There are a number of early help services already within the county and a co-ordinated approach will be developed as part of the strategy which, through the governance, leadership and management of these arrangements, will be a commitment to the integration of pathways and services.
  - Over previous years there has been a similar approach within the county, so there may now be a slightly negative view of the strategy as 'we have been here before' and at the same time a real or perceived reduction in funding for services. It will therefore be important to consider these views and experiences and develop ways to integrate and engage partners in this new strategy through communication, briefings and training.
  - With the implementation of a planned re-alignment of referrals to the early help community model there will need to be careful management of the current

workload within MASH and the higher level children's wellbeing services to early help support. The early help strategy will take time to develop and identify work with the community resources, whilst at the same time referrals are still ongoing and requiring appropriate support. This will be managed through close work and liaison between children's wellbeing teams and services to ensure that any referrals are managed appropriately and access early help as this support is identified and developed.

## **Consultees**

18. As part of the development of the strategy and in partnership with the adults and wellbeing directorate and the design council project, communities across the county are being consulted to inform the development of how early help can be integrated and delivered into communities. As the strategy progresses through the formal governance process, the following partners and partnership boards will also be consulted to ensure that all agencies are engaged and committed to the early help strategy implementation.

- West Mercia Police
- Wye Valley NHS Trust
- West Mercia Youth Offending Service
- Herefordshire Clinical Commissioning Group
- 2gether NHS Foundation Trust
- Herefordshire Voluntary Organisations Support Service (HVOSS)
- Herefordshire Safeguarding Children's Board

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 draft early help strategy

Appendix 2 equality impact statement

## **Background papers**

- None identified.