

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF A KEY DECISION CABINET

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| ITEM: | EARLY HELP STRATEGY |
| Members Present: | Councillors: AW Johnson (Leader), H Bramer, D Harlow, PM Morgan (Deputy Leader), P Rone. |
| Date of Decision: | 20 October 2016 |
| Exempt: | No |
| Confidential | No |
| This is a key decision because it is likely to be significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising one or more wards in the county. | |
| A notice was served in accordance with Part 3, Section 9 (Publicity in connection with key decisions) of The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012. | |
| Urgency/Special Urgency: (As defined in Constitution) | No |
| Purpose: | To approve the early help strategy 2016-18 |
| Decision: | THAT: (a) The early help strategy 2016-18 (appendix 1) be approved |
| Reasons for the Decision: | <p>The early help strategy will play a key role in securing outcomes set out in Herefordshire's 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 delivery of Herefordshire's health and wellbeing strategy.</p> <p>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. At the same time there is an increased pressure on resources, with higher numbers entering health and social care services. Herefordshire has experienced comparatively high numbers of MASH and child protection referrals and the number of looked after children are at comparatively high level against statistical neighbours. Whilst the local authority and partners do not set activity by statistical comparisons they do point to potentially different ways of meeting needs. There are significant cost pressures, with capped budgets, that need to be absorbed. The early help strategy provides a vehicle to maximise the council's and partner's work and resources to meet need in a more preventative way. It also</p> |

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| | <p>recognises that there are strengths and services within local communities than can play a strong and effective part in supporting families. The council has been clear that it is families and communities who bring up children, and this proposed approach will build on that theme.</p> |
| <p>Options Considered:</p> | <p>The alternative option to the proposed early help strategy is to continue with the current arrangements. However this is not recommended as it does not maximise or coordinate early help in Herefordshire, and has contributed to a higher than necessary number of referrals through the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). Many of these are inappropriate to be dealt with at the agreed Herefordshire Safeguarding Children’s Board’s level 4, threshold of need. Herefordshire has experienced higher comparative levels of child protection referrals and increased numbers 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 build on current early help activity and provide a clearer approach across Herefordshire that will improve effectiveness to ensure where appropriate, children and families access support at an earlier stage of need; and contribute to reducing pressure on the statutory child protection system.</p> <p>In considering alternative solutions to this issue, the provision of early help is anationally 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 in all agencies.</p> |
| <p>Conflict of Interest ■ (See below):</p> | |
| <p>Date the key decision is due to take effect:</p> | <p>26 October 2016</p> |

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| <p>COUNCILLOR AW JOHNSON.....Date: 20 October 2016 LEADER OF THE COUNCIL</p> |
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■ a record of any conflict of interest declared by any executive member who is consulted by the member which relates to the decision;

And

■ in respect of any declared conflict of interest, a note of dispensation granted by the relevant local authority’s head of paid service.