

Wiltshire Council

Children's Select Committee

26 July 2012

Executive response to the report of the Rapid Scrutiny Exercise:

Family Information Service

Purpose of the Report

1. To present the Executive's response to the Family Information Service rapid scrutiny exercise established by the Children's Services Select Committee on 26 March and held on 11 May. The recommendations of the Rapid Scrutiny Exercise were endorsed by the Committee on 31st May.

Action Required of the Committee

2. To note the Executive's responses and to agree any further action necessary.

Background

3. The Children's Services Select Committee established a rapid scrutiny exercise on 29 March following receipt of a report on the a review of the Family Information Service (FIS) and Parent Partnership Service (PPS). It was reported that the review concluded that there was significant duplication around provision of information for parents and carers, particularly parents and carers of children with disabilities/special educational needs. It had been decided that significant changes to the FIS and PPS service specifications and contracts were therefore required and proposed a number of changes that reduced the service specifications in the Council's contract with Ask and the level of funding to be provided. At the time of the Committee meeting on 29 March, a final decision had not been made as to the continuation of the Council's contract with Ask and the level of funding to be provided in the future. The Committee resolved to undertake a rapid scrutiny exercise to explore further the nature of any duplication in the provision of the Family Information Service and plans for how the service will be provided in future.
4. The Rapid Scrutiny Exercise took place on 11 May and on 31 May its report and recommendations were endorsed by the Committee and referred to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services for response. The response is presented below.

Rapid Scrutiny Exercise Recommendations and Executive Responses

Recommendation 1

The Rapid Scrutiny Group welcomes the proposed six month review of the reconfigured Family Information Service, but recommends that a wider subset of agencies, partners and service users be involved, including the Police, health visitors, voluntary groups (such as the Trussell Trust), nurseries, pre-schools and the providers of the Family Information Service;

Executive Response

The proposed review will take place between January and April 2013. The Children's Services Commissioning Team will ensure that a range of agencies/partners and service users have an opportunity to provide feedback on the reconfigured service. Service providers will be involved in a meeting at the beginning of the review.

The purpose of the review will be to look at how Family Information Services should be delivered from April 2014. In the current financial climate, the review will need to focus on ensuring that the Council continues to meet its statutory responsibilities whilst providing best value for money. The review will include research on how Family Information Services are being delivered in other authorities.

Recommendation 2

The Rapid Scrutiny Group is concerned that

- a) those children and families previously or currently receiving outreach services from Ask must be 'picked up' by outreach services provided by children centres;
- b) the potential benefits of a 'one stop shop' for family information should not be lost as a result of this service reconfiguration;
- c) the reconfigured Family Information Service must be monitored to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of vulnerable users;

and therefore recommends that the Council and Ask work closely together to ensure that these concerns are addressed, including in the proposed six month review of the reconfigured service.

Executive Response

The Children's Services Commissioning Team will continue to work closely with Ask and other providers to ensure that families with different information needs are able to access the information they require. All providers will be monitoring telephone calls and visits to their website and will be recording any feedback from service users.

Children's Centres, Health Visitors and other front line professionals such as Parenting Support Advisors will continue to ensure that vulnerable parents receive the information and help they need. The work of Children's Centres and Health Visitors is monitored through contract management processes led by the local authority and the Primary Care Trust. The monitoring of contracts includes looking at how well services meet the needs of vulnerable parents.

Conclusion

Members are asked to:

Note the above Executive's response to the report of the Rapid Scrutiny Exercise for the Family Information Service and agree any further action as appropriate.

Cllr Lionel Grundy OBE – Cabinet Member for Children's Services

Carolyn Godfrey, Corporate Director

Report author: Julie Cramp, Joint Director for Commissioning and Performance

01225 julia.cramp@wiltshire.gov.uk

Appendices

Appendix 1 Report of the Rapid Scrutiny Exercise: Family Information Service

Background documents

None