

## Wiltshire Council

### Children's Select Committee

27 January 2015

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## Update report of the Early Help Strategy Task Group

### Purpose

1. To present the findings of the Early Help Strategy Task Group following its meeting on 19 January 2015. This was to review the most recently populated Early Help dataset; consider whether it is a suitable mechanism for monitoring delivery of the Early Help Strategy and whether it meets the task group's recommendations.

### Background

2. The Children's Select Committee received the Early Help Strategy 2013-17 in draft, which sets out the Council's proposals for Wiltshire's early help offer, including what it currently does, the desired improved outcomes for children and young people and the priority objectives to achieve this.
3. On 14 October 2014 the Early Help Strategy Task Group presented their [final report](#) to advise the Children's Select Committee on how it could monitor the implementation of the Early Help Strategy going forward, including additional recommendations to the current methods in use by the Council.
4. The Task Group discussed a series of key areas that should be considered by the Committee, these included:
  - Transitions: throughout childhood, extending into adolescence and adult life; with particular reference to those that have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and looked after children;
  - Catering for the impact of the military rebasing programme and its impacts on the Strategy;
  - Indicators in education i.e. attainment, exclusions (permanent and internal), number and impact of children registering for free school meals and referrals by in-school counselling services (where they exist or working with partners that provide such services externally);
  - Establish how to prevent children coming into care by identifying trends from the data collected;
  - Draw focus on the well-being of young people in terms of what engages them, levels of social skills, whether they are getting adequate exercise and nutrition.
5. The Task Group made a series of recommendations in relation to how the Children's Select Committee could measure the effectiveness of the Early Help

Strategy and whether it is achieving its objectives; this is addressed by the first set of recommendations. The second set of recommendations is additional issues that were discussed in the process of establishing these measurements. These were all endorsed by committee on 14 October 2014.

#### Recommendations (as endorsed on 14 October 2014)

- 1 A) That the dataset indicates whether a high or low number is good for each statistic;  
B) The use of RAG ratings would be useful as a quick reference for the Committee; as a method of flagging up problems quickly and easily, including a lack of red items or where an item shows as amber too often, that it may therefore be required to be escalated to a red;
- 2 A) Working with schools is key to recording behaviour, particularly changes in behaviour, in the school environment, including attendance;  
B) To measure how many referrals made by schools to early help services there are and how many of these are escalated, this may be in terms of a percentage;  
C) Measure how many schools provide early help tools such as listening or counselling services and the age brackets for the provision;  
D) Measure how effective we are as a Council at challenging schools on their use of pupil premium funding, particularly for the provision of counselling services;  
E) Compare the levels of referrals into the Strategy for the 76% of 3-4 year olds who attend pre-school and those who do not;  
B) Measure the number of referrals in the first year of secondary school as a way of indicating whether there were issues at the transition stage between primary and secondary school;
- 3 A) Compare attainment at Key Stage 2 for those in receipt of free school meals and those who do not as an indicator of the impact of the transition from primary to secondary school;  
B) Measure whether there is a marked decline in the number of children being registered as eligible for the receipt of free school meals as a result of the universal offer of free school meals in the infant years as well as the subsequent take up once the universal offer ceases;  
C) That the receipt of free school meals may be an indicator of eligibility for other early help and therefore should be assessed in terms of its merit as an indicator;
- 4 A) Use the data collected on NEETs as an indicator of the early help offer not being as effective as it could be;  
B) Examine the effectiveness of the Early Help Strategy with regard to looked after children by measuring any decrease in the number of children coming into care;
- 5 A) In order to measure the number of referrals and take up from military families, CAF s should incorporate an indication of whether the child is from a military family;

- B) Measure the impact of military rebasing including the impacts on resources and the percentage of referrals coming from the military and whether there are additional people that would be receiving early help if not for similar military based services;
  - C) Identify and measure the difference in behaviour in military families i.e. occurrences of domestic violence and mental health issues;
- 6 A) Measure the uptake of positive activities for young people (507B) through Area Boards;
- B) Compare referral levels for those who participate in enriching activities and of those who do not;
- 7 As the Committee has active Task Groups looking at issues surrounding SEND, the associated improvement plan for SEND services; for looked after children and schools with particular regard to the impact of 6<sup>th</sup> form provision and careers advices; it is deemed most appropriate that these Task Groups retain any overlapping elements with the Early Help Strategy within their remit to apply their expertise and more in depth analysis. This may also be employed in relation to other subtopics within the Early Help Strategy where a more in depth investigation is deemed necessary.

Additional Recommendations (as endorsed on 14 October 2014)

- 8 That additional no child specific measures may need to be identified by the appropriate officers to measure the impact of issues such as: poverty, being a military family or family issues such as alcohol and substance abuse on the child;
- 9 There needs to be a method for raising a concern more easily, particularly for partner organisations, such as community youth clubs and how Community Youth Officers may be approached as the go to person. A more simplistic approach is required to raise concerns as a method of prevention to include the communication between partners and Community Youth Officers;
- 10 Support for Town and Parish Councils to signpost issues to communities on their websites is required to enable more effective communications;
- 11 Clarity for partner organisations should be established as to what the package of support could be if information is received to trigger the offer of early help. Partners need to be clear of what referral into the Strategy offers and the benefits of such action in order to tackle reluctance in referring children and young people.

**Update following the 19 January 2015 meeting**

6. The Task Group was reconvened on 19 January to review the most recently populated dataset; consider whether it is a suitable mechanism for monitoring delivery of the Early Help Strategy and whether it meets the task group's recommendations (listed above).

The following observations were made:

- a) It was noted that the dataset is not fully populated and that the service tried to look at what is needed to be monitored in order to begin evaluating the Strategy. In some circumstances where data is not available, the service will do some tracking or auditing to find out, though this is not always possible;
- b) Concern was expressed regarding the number of red and amber rated items. It was discussed that this may indicate that the targets are being set too high, for example our own target is set significantly above the national average and/ or target.
- c) It was acknowledged that performance is good in the following areas: The reach of children's centres, attainment of children in care at GCSE and children in poverty;
- d) However, performance is not as good in the following areas: Level of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET), percentage of children achieving a good level of development in the Foundation and there is an achievement gap between those who are entitled to free school meals and those who are not;
- e) There is currently no validated data for Special Educational Needs (SEN). This will be available at the end of January;
- f) The overall feeling is that monitoring of early help in Wiltshire is good and benefits from the inclusion of child and family voices as opposed to just looking at raw data. The Task Group will meet again to consider the dataset in more detail and draw a conclusion as to whether the current monitoring mechanism is adequate.

## **Proposal**

- 7. To note the report of the task group.

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**Cllr Jon Hubbard, Chairman of the Early Help Strategy Task Group**  
**Cllr Magnus MacDonald, Substitute Chairman for the 19 January 2015 meeting**

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## **Appendices**

None