

TITLE OF REPORT: Early Help Strategy

REPORT OF: Caroline O'Neill, Strategic Director, Care Wellbeing and Learning

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide Cabinet with the final version of the Early Help Strategy and to seek Council approval of the Strategy.

Background

2. The Early Help Strategy will bring together many strands of work to create a vision for the future where families are resilient and supported within their local community. This will reduce the need for specialist intervention by developing flexible evidence based early interventions which are delivered in a timely way.

Proposal

3. The Council has consulted with partners and stakeholders on the draft Early Help Strategy and have made changes in response to feedback received. No further changes are proposed to the Strategy.

Recommendations

4. Cabinet is asked to recommend the Council to approve the Early Help Strategy

For the following reason:

The Early Help Strategy provides leaders and practitioners working with children, young people and families with information and guidance that will enable them to understand the current context and role of the Early Help Service.

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APPENDIX 1

Policy Context

1. The Early Help Strategy is designed to develop a safe, sustainable partnership approach to providing early intervention and prevention services. The Strategy builds on the good work already being delivered as part of the overarching framework to deliver a coherent and consistent early help offer in which everyone understands the pathways available and their role in delivering services.
2. The Early Help Strategy has been developed within the context of national and local policy. Over the last five years reviews and research have demonstrated the economic and social value of prevention and early intervention programmes and ways of working. Both 'Working Together to Safeguard children 2013' and Professor Eileen Munro's report on the future of safeguarding (2011) pick up these themes and promote the importance of Early Help within the wider safeguarding context.
3. The strategy reflects the current Council Plan and the desired outcomes of the Council's emerging strategic approach "Making Gateshead a Place Where Everyone Thrives".

Background

4. Nationally there is increasing evidence that supporting children and families at the earliest opportunity has significant impact in improving life chances and increasing outcomes into adulthood.
5. Gateshead's Early Help Strategy is a key opportunity to refocus the vision of delivering the right response by the right service at the right time.
6. We need to ensure the needs of vulnerable children, young people and families are identified at the earliest opportunity and that the needs are appropriately assessed and met by working effectively together.
7. Early Help Services should be shaped by the views and experiences of the children, young people and families building resilience and increasing their capacity to manage challenging circumstances before issues escalate and poor outcomes ensue.
8. An early help approach offers families more than a single solution to address emerging issues.
9. Early interventions focus on reducing the risk and promoting a strength based model in the child, young person and family taking full account of their cultural context.

Consultation

10. The Strategy has been in consultation between September 2016 and November 2017. Partners, stakeholders and service users have been consulted during this period.

11. The Cabinet Members for Children and Young People have been consulted.

Alternative Options

12. Cabinet could decide not to approve the Strategy however; this would have significant implications for the development of the Early Help Service and could lead to additional costs being incurred should more expensive interventions be required for families.

Implications of Recommended Option

13. Resources:

a) **Financial Implications** – The Strategic Director, Corporate Resources has confirmed there are no financial implications identified as a result of this report.

b) **Human Resources Implications** – Continual support and development will be provided to staff to ensure they are confident and capable in their abilities to respond to the new way of working.

c) **Property Implications** - None

14. **Risk Management Implication** - None

15. **Equality and Diversity Implications** - This strategy has been developed to ensure that the early help and intervention offer makes a significant contribution to all children, young people and families, irrespective of their protected characteristics.

16. **Crime and Disorder Implications** – None

17. **Health Implications** - None

18. **Sustainability Implications** - None

19. **Human Rights Implications** - None

20. **Area and Ward Implications** - None