

Open Report on behalf of Debbie Barnes, Director of Children's Services

Report to:	Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee
Date:	13 February 2014
Subject:	Early Help Offer and Strategy

Summary:

These documents describe the Arrangements for providing early help to children and families in Lincolnshire and the areas for development to improve on the current position.

Actions Required:

The Committee is invited to consider and comment on the report.

1. Background

Lincolnshire County Council and its Partners have provided early intervention services for many years.

The children and young people's partnership agreed to introduce a system to improve the process of working together to meet children and family's needs through the Common Assessment Framework and Team Around the Child in 2006.

These approaches are now described as Early Help arrangements when the term was introduced in Working Together to Safeguard Children, April 2013.

The new Working Together to Safeguard Children guidance places an emphasis on the importance of early help in promoting the welfare of children, together with clear arrangements for collaboration, and we want to ensure that our early help offer reflects the ambitions of this guidance.

Our early help offer takes into account reports and reviews by Frank Field, Dame Clare Tickell, Graham Allen and Marmot, with regards to the impact of growing up in poverty on child outcomes, use of evidence based approaches and programmes, and the important focus on the early years

Central to our early help offer is the early identification of children and families who would benefit from early help and a co-ordinated early assessment and response to prevent abuse and neglect of children and young people, and improve outcomes for children and families as a whole.

Our Early Help offer also takes into account key messages from Munro's review of Child Protection

- preventative services will do more to reduce abuse and neglect than reactive services
- co-ordination of services is important to maximise efficiency
- within preventative services, there needs to be good mechanisms for helping people identify those children and young people who are suffering or likely to suffer harm from abuse and neglect and who need referral to children's social care

The attached documents outline Lincolnshire's current Early Help Offer.

Working Together states that

'For children who need additional help, every day matters. Academic research is consistent in underlining the damage to children from delaying intervention. The actions taken by professionals to meet the needs of these children as early as possible can be critical to their future'

Lincolnshire's Early Help Offer identifies the need for help for children and families as soon as problems start to emerge, or when there is a strong likelihood that problems will emerge in the future.

The Early Help Offer is not just for very young children as problems may also emerge at any point throughout childhood and adolescence. The Early Help Offer includes universal and targeted services designed to reduce or prevent specific problems from escalating or becoming entrenched.

Our commitment to early help is central to our Children and Young People's Plan with Early Help cutting across our four priority outcomes:

- Children and Young People are; Healthy and Safe
- Children and Young People; Develop to their potential in their early years and are ready for school
- Children and Young People; Learn and Achieve;
- Children and Young People are; Ready for Adult Life

Crucially for parents, it is envisaged that, in time, the Early Help Offer will provide the 'front door' through which they and professionals access additional support at any level.

The critical features of an effective early help offer are:

- a multi-disciplinary approach that brings a range of professional skills and expertise to bear through a "Team Around The Child" approach
- a relationship with a trusted Lead Professional who can engage the child and their family, and coordinate the support needed from other agencies
- practice that empowers families and helps them to develop the capacity to resolve their own problems
- a holistic approach that addresses children's needs in the wider family context
- simple, streamlined referral and assessment processes.

The Early Help Offer document outlines the services that are available through early help arrangements. This document continues to grow and be added to.

The Early Help Strategy also outlines the areas that Partners are working on together to continue to improve the Early Help arrangements in Lincolnshire.

2. Conclusion

The Early Help Offer and Strategy set out the current arrangements in Lincolnshire for co-ordinated early intervention.

The Early Help Strategy sets out the areas of work partners are committed to, to improve those arrangements.

3. Consultation

a) Policy Proofing Actions Required

n/a

4. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Early Help Offer
Appendix B	Early Help Strategy

5. Background Papers

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

This report was written by Stuart Carlton, who can be contacted on 01522 554051 or stuart.carlton@lincolnshire.gov.uk

This page is intentionally left blank