

meeting COUNTY COUNCIL

date 30th June 2011

agenda item number **13**

REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES

Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy

Purpose of report

1. This report seeks the approval of the County Council for the Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy in respect of work with children, young people and their families.

Information and advice

Background

2. Following the unannounced inspection of safeguarding arrangements in Nottinghamshire by Ofsted in October 2009, Nottinghamshire's Pathway to Provision initiative was developed and launched in September 2010. The Pathway to Provision provides multi-agency threshold and referral guidance for children's services practitioners, based upon the needs of children and young people, in the form of an easy to use handbook. Its key features are:-
 - **Guidance on the referral arrangements for Joint Access Teams (JATs).** These are multi agency teams based around families of schools that are designed to support the timely provision of appropriate children's services
 - **Guidance on the use by professionals of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF)** to effectively assess the needs of children and families, and
 - **Guidance on the service threshold and referral arrangements for Children's Social Care** and the support that should be provided to children and families following the closure of a case by Children's Social Care.

3. The overall intention of the initiative has been to support the provision of appropriate services to children, young people and families as soon as possible, based upon the premise that earlier intervention results in better outcomes for service users, and reduced demand for high cost, specialist social care provision.
4. The Pathways to Provision initiative has been well received by agencies and professionals alike. Following the most recent unannounced Ofsted inspection of safeguarding arrangements in March 2011, Inspectors reported that the Pathway to Provision handbook "**clearly sets out the threshold for access to the child protection service. This has been disseminated across the partnership and provides a sound basis for the delivery of services**". In addition, early indications are that the new referral and threshold arrangements are having a positive impact upon the number and quality of referrals made to Children's Social Care.
5. As a further step towards delivering earlier access to provision for children, young people and families, and to complement the Pathways to Provision initiative, a broader Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy for children and young people's services in Nottinghamshire has been developed. As such, the Strategy brings together the Pathway to Provision initiative with other developments, especially in respect of Early Years provision, to set a clear future direction for the development of early intervention and prevention services in Nottinghamshire.
6. The Strategy has also been influenced by the national policy context, including the two following reports commissioned by the Coalition Government:
 - *The Foundation Years, Independent Review on Poverty* (December 2010) by Frank Field MP
 - *Early Intervention: The Next Steps* (January 2011) by Graham Allen MP

Both reports are referred to in the Government's Child Poverty Strategy with regard to the fundamental importance of the early years in determining children's life chances. The Government intends to produce a 'new vision' for the early years later in 2011.

7. The recently published final report of the Munro Review of Child Protection (May 2011) recommends that there should be a duty on local authorities and statutory partners to coordinate an early offer of help to families who do not meet the thresholds for services from Children's Social Care, to address needs before they escalate to child protection issues. The adoption of the Strategy will support the delivery of such a duty, should it be progressed by Government.

The Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy

8. The Nottinghamshire Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy, attached as **Appendix A** to this report, sets out the ambition of the County Council and its children's services partners for early intervention and intervention services. This is that **children, young people and their families receive the most appropriate support to meet their needs at the earliest opportunity, in order to ensure better outcomes and the cost effective delivery of services.**
9. The Strategy defines early intervention in Nottinghamshire as **'intervening early and as soon as possible to tackle problems emerging for children, young people and their families, or with a population most at risk of developing problems. Early intervention is a process and may occur at any point in a child or young person's life.'**
10. The focus for early intervention and prevention services will be those children and young people whose needs require early intervention or targeted services, as defined by the Pathway to Provision's continuum of need.
11. The Strategy outlines the key principles that will underpin Nottinghamshire's approach to early intervention and prevention:
 - **To intervene at the earliest opportunity in order to secure the best outcomes for children, young people and families**
 - **To target resources at the early years, in order to maximise the future life chances of children and young people**
 - **To ensure that children and young people are effectively safeguarded by all of the agencies and staff that work with them**
 - **To work together to reduce duplication in areas such as the assessments of need**
 - **To ensure children, young people and families will be supported to participate in key early intervention and prevention processes**
 - **To ensure that the views and experiences of children, young people and families inform and influence all areas of development**
 - **To use evidence-based practice to inform planning for future service provision**
 - **To adopt a whole family approach, whilst keeping the child or young person firmly at the centre of any intervention.**

12. The core focus of the Strategy, however, is upon the delivery of 5 major strands of development activity for early intervention. Within each strand are a series of key activities. The 5 strands, along with the key activities, are summarised below (and are underpinned by more detailed action plans for each priority action).

i. The provision of services to ensure the best start in life

- We will review the Early Years and Early Intervention Service in 2011 and will recommission key elements of the Service in 2012 in line with a refocused vision for the Service that will emphasise the provision of targeted services for vulnerable children and families within a universal service framework
- We will develop a partnership approach to the introduction in Nottinghamshire of the 'Health Visitor Implementation Plan 2011-2015' with a focus on the most vulnerable families
- We are committed to the development and roll out of the Family Nurse Partnership arrangements to provide intensive and structured support to the most vulnerable young first time mothers

ii. The development of language for life

- We will embed further the Nottinghamshire Language for Life Strategy to ensure that all children have the necessary communication skills for learning and future development.

iii. The engagement and support of parents and carers

- We will develop an effective framework of specialist and targeted family and parenting support services, based around the delivery of proven programmes
- We will develop a whole family Common Assessment Framework (CAF) tool to support effective needs assessment for families in need of early intervention provision
- We will develop an engagement strategy to ensure the views of service users inform our services.
- We will develop a training pathway for practitioners working with families and children as part of an early intervention and prevention learning and development action plan.

iv. The development of effective structures and processes

- We will further develop Joint Access Teams as the key mechanism for early intervention and prevention in Nottinghamshire

- We will deliver the Pathway to Provision enforcement plan to embed the Pathways approach across children's services agencies in Nottinghamshire
- We will develop district early intervention and prevention management groups to co-ordinate services locally, ensuring they support the needs of children and families and are delivered cost effectively
- We will appoint 7 early intervention district managers by June 2011 to support the delivery of the objectives set out in this strand.

v. The use and provision of management information

- We will introduce an electronic e-CAF recording system to record securely individual CAFs and to provide management information about the needs of children and families, and the outcomes following interventions.

13. In terms of measuring the impact of the Strategy, a range of early intervention and prevention impact indicators are being developed. **Appendix B** provides information on the current performance of these indicators. The likely impact indicators are set out below. Where these correspond with planned national indicators, this is highlighted.

- The readiness of children to start school and to progress through subsequent stages (national measure to be decided)
- The success in closing the gap in educational attainment between children and young people from different socio-economic backgrounds
- The reduction in the number of children and young people missing school
- The reduction in the rate of teenage pregnancies
- The tackling of inequalities in low birth weight in order to improve health outcomes in childhood and adulthood
- The reduction in the number of children and young people experiencing poverty
- The number of children benefiting from an early years place (national measure to be decided)
- The rate of participation in education, training and employment by 16-18 year olds
- The number of families that have been through an evidence-based early intervention programme (national measure to be decided)

- The number of contacts made to Children's Social Care
 - The percentage of referrals to Children's Social Care going on to initial assessment
 - The number of children requiring statutory child protection intervention
 - The number of first time entrants to the youth justice system.
14. As part of a detailed consultation the Strategy has received wide spread support across the partners of the Nottinghamshire Children's Trust, as all major providers of services are looking to develop early intervention and prevention services as a means of both reducing demand for costly specialist services and improving outcomes for service users.
15. The Strategy, together with a refreshed Pathway to Provision handbook, will be launched at the beginning of July 2011, via a series of launch events across the County. It is expected that 800 – 1,000 practitioners and managers will attend, thus ensuring a widespread awareness of the Strategy and its priorities.
16. The Children, Families and Cultural Services Senior Leadership Team and the Nottinghamshire's Children's Trust will be responsible for the monitoring and review of the Strategy, which will be reviewed and refreshed on an annual basis.

Statutory and policy implications

17. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, personnel, crime and disorder and those using the service. Where such implications are material, they have been described in the text of the report. Attention is however drawn to the following:-

Personnel implications

18. The implementation of the Strategy will require the reshaping of some services. Staff affected by any proposed changes will be fully consulted with in accordance with the policy and procedures of the County Council.

Financial implications

19. The Strategy has been developed within the context of the County Council's Improvement Programme, and will support the delivery of the service reviews for Early Years and Family and Parenting Support.

Equal opportunities implications

20. The implementation of the Strategy will improve access to early intervention and prevention services across the County for children, young people and families.

Implications for service users

21. The implementation of the Strategy will lead to the needs of children, young people and families being identified earlier and appropriate support being provided at the earliest opportunity. This will lead to improved outcomes for children and young people.

RECOMMENDATION

22. That the Council approves the Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy, attached as Appendix A to this report.

COUNCILLOR PHILIP OWEN

Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services

Reasons for recommendation

23. The implementation of the Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy will underpin and support the transformation programme for Nottinghamshire's Children's Social Care. Effective early intervention and prevention services are essential to improve the outcomes of children, young people and their families in Nottinghamshire. The principle of investing earlier in children's lives will reduce demand for more expensive specialist services.

Legal Services' comments (LM/20.05.11)

24. Full Council has the authority to approve the recommendations in the report. The legal position in relation to the Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy is set out in the report and appendix.

Financial comments of the Service Director – Finance (NDR)

25. There are no financial implications arising directly from this report

Background papers available for inspection

Pathway to Provision Handbook

Electoral division(s) affected

Nottinghamshire

M19C2805