

**TO:  
THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD**

**MULTI-AGENCY EARLY HELP STRATEGY FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE  
AND THEIR FAMILIES 2015-2018**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1. The Early help strategy sets out the partnership framework as to how Team Doncaster will coordinate and deliver early help services. The strategy is a three year strategy to establish and join up the early help system which will promote the identification of emerging needs and earlier intervention for children and young people so as to prevent the escalation of problems which are damaging to individuals and families and which are expensive and complex to deliver.

**EXEMPT REPORT**

2. This report is not exempt from publication.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

3. The Health and Wellbeing Board is requested to receive the strategy for information.

**WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE CITIZENS OF DONCASTER?**

4. Providing Early help is more effective in promoting and securing the welfare of children and young people than reacting at a later stage. Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges at any point in a child's life. Implementation of effective early help services and support will ensure that problems do not escalate and that children and young people are therefore able to receive an earlier resolution to problems which is significantly less damaging to their welfare and more cost effective for those not directly affected and for service providers.

**BACKGROUND**

5. The Munro report of child protection and subsequent statutory guidance identified the important and effective role which early help interventions can have on the lives of children, young people and families. The preceding Allen report had identified a long list of financial costs to society as a result of poor preventative services, which include an increased need for mental health provision, high benefits dependency, preventable reliance on social

care and provision of high cost specialist care provision. Statutory guidance emphasises that early help relies on local agencies working together, identifying those in need of early help, assessing those needs and provision of services, which will include high quality support in universal services, but other typical services such as, family and parenting programmes, health support, support for problems in relation to drugs, alcohol and domestic violence, services may also include a focus on improving family functioning and building family capacity.

The Early Help strategy articulates the foregoing principles in the priorities which it identifies in paragraph 2 of the document. The strategy proceeds to identify current early help prevention and provision and describes how need is identified, assessed and met and how children and families access universal, targeted and specialist services. The strategy describes the measures which have been taken and are planned to be taken to improve the early help system which include the establishment of early help coordinators, early help networks and the Early help Hub.

The strategy is established on the principles identified at paragraph 4 of the document which include, local accessibility; listening to the voice of Children, young people and families, especially how to shape service delivery; ; strong partnership working; reaching out to hard to reach families and communities; providing the right support at the right time. The strategy is also founded on seven key pillars, which are:- Good information advice and guidance for families to self-help; good understanding of 'place' and commissioning of localised provision through Collaboratives; development of DMBC 'Family Hubs' to coordinate and provide services for 0-19 years and families; building the Lead Professional role and capacity through the partnership; the consistent application of Thresholds as described at Appendix 2 of the strategy; establishment of the 'Early help Hub'; and an effective challenge and Quality assurance framework .

The strategy is underpinned by a suite of documents which includes an implementation plan and an output and outcomes based performance monitoring report and a Quality assurance framework, which the Early help implementation group will rigorously monitor and which the Children and Families Partnership Board will oversee.

## **OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

6. There is no obligation to produce an early help strategy however, as a matter of good practice it is widely recognised and there is a tacit expectation by Ofsted that one will be produced, not least because this provides a focal point for local partners to direct their collective energies.

## **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED OPTION**

7. The early help strategy is a key plank in Doncaster's ambition for safe, healthy and resilient children, young people, families and communities, by ensuring support through universal services with good access to targeted support, providing support to families with additional needs at the earliest opportunity, working to build resilience in families and providing services which are responsive and flexible to meet the needs of families.

The Health and Wellbeing Board is a key strategic arm of the Team Doncaster Partnership and has an important role in securing some of the ambitions contained within this plan and via the Health and Wellbeing strategy provides strands of the ‘golden thread’ which links these key documents together.

## IMPACT ON THE COUNCIL’S KEY OUTCOMES

8.

	<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Implications</b>
	<p>All people in Doncaster benefit from a thriving and resilient economy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Mayoral Priority: Creating Jobs and Housing</i></li> <li>• <i>Mayoral Priority: Be a strong voice for our veterans</i></li> <li>• <i>Mayoral Priority: Protecting Doncaster’s vital services</i></li> </ul>	<p>Healthy and independent children and families will ensure that not only will these people be able to participate in the economy but will also contribute to the creation and maintenance of a strong economy.</p>
	<p>People live safe, healthy, active and independent lives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Mayoral Priority: Safeguarding our Communities</i></li> <li>• <i>Mayoral Priority: Bringing down the cost of living</i></li> </ul>	<p>Effective early help provision reduces the vulnerability of children and young people and the potential for damaging safeguarding issues for the individual and the community to arise</p>
	<p>People in Doncaster benefit from a high quality built and natural environment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Mayoral Priority: Creating Jobs and Housing</i></li> <li>• <i>Mayoral Priority: Safeguarding our Communities</i></li> <li>• <i>Mayoral Priority: Bringing down the cost of living</i></li> </ul>	<p>Effective early help provision reduces the vulnerability of children and young people and the potential for safeguarding issues to arise.</p>
	<p>All families thrive.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Mayoral Priority: Protecting Doncaster’s vital services</i></li> </ul>	
	<p>Council services are modern and value for money.</p>	<p>Effective Early help services are highly cost – effective in reducing reliance on high cost social care and specialist support services</p>
	<p>Working with our partners we will provide strong leadership and governance.</p>	<p>Implementation of the Early help strategy leans heavily on effective partnership working. The Council will</p>

		through its support and participation oversee the strategy and its effective implementation which will be subject to challenge in multi – agency fora.
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## **RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS**

9. Effective early help services are fundamental in reducing the risk of escalation for individual children and more generally, safeguarding and child protection issues arising and the attendant damaging implications to the individual, to families and to society. Early help has wider and longer term benefits for the targeted provision of services to those who most need them and for society more generally in reducing the risk of alienation, offending and disadvantage in local communities.

## **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

10. There are no legal implications directly arising from this report. There is no explicit statutory requirement to produce an Early help Strategy, or indeed specific early help services, however, a number of legislative provisions outline the framework for certain elements of early help provision, including those for children’s centres; Early Years foundations stage framework. Section 10 of the Children Act 2004 requires each Local Authority to make arrangements to promote cooperation between the Authority, each of the Authority’s relevant partners and such other persons or bodies working with children in the Local Authority’s area as the Authority considers appropriate. The arrangements are made with a view to improving the wellbeing of all children in the Authority’s area, which includes protection from harm and neglect - this would include the contribution of early help services.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

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

## **HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS**

12. There are no human resource implications directly arising from this report

## **TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS**

13. There are no technology implications directly arising from this report, however, achieving the ambitions of the early help strategy may require appropriate investment/disinvestment from ICT systems.

## **EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

14. There are no equality implications directly arising from this report. However, it is known that children and families with specialist and additional needs are disproportionately represented among minority groups.

## **CONSULTATION**

15. The Doncaster Safeguarding Children's Board and the Early Help implementation Group have considered and approved the Early help strategy. The Early help strategy will be presented to the Council's Cabinet for endorsement in November 2015.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

16. Multi-Agency Early help Strategy for Children, Young people and their Families 2015 – 2018 (attached)

## **REPORT AUTHOR & CONTRIBUTORS**

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