

**Meeting:** Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
**Date:** 4 June 2013  
**Subject:** Early Help Offer  
**Report of:** Cllr Mark Versallion, Executive Member for Children's Services  
**Summary:** The report requests that the Committee comment on the Early Help Offer to families in Central Bedfordshire Council as revised and updated.

**Advising Officer:** Edwina Grant, Deputy Chief Executive / Director of Children's Services  
**Contact Officer:** Sue Tyler, Acting Assistant Director/Head of Child Poverty and Early Intervention  
**Public/Exempt:** Public  
**Wards Affected:** All  
**Function of:** Council

## **CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

### **Council Priorities:**

The Early Help Offer supports

- Improved educational attainment.
- Promote health and wellbeing and protecting the vulnerable.

### **Financial:**

1. The publication of a revised and updated Early Help Offer has no financial implications

### **Legal:**

2. The publication of a revised and updated Early Help Offer has no legal implications

### **Risk Management:**

3. Not applicable

### **Staffing (including Trades Unions):**

4. Not Applicable.

### **Equalities/Human Rights:**

5. The publication of the revised and updated Early Help Offer has no new Equality or Human Rights issues attached.

### **Public Health**

6. The publication of the revised and updated Early Help Offer has no new Public Health issues attached.

### **Community Safety:**

7. Not applicable.

**Sustainability:**

8. Not applicable.

**Procurement:**

9. Not applicable.

**RECOMMENDATION:****The Committee is asked to:**

- 1. Comment on the publication of the Council's Early Help Offer, revised and updated in light of publication of "Working Together to safeguard children Guidance 2013".**

**Background**

10. An Early Intervention Framework has been in operation in Central Bedfordshire since October 2011.
11. The April 2012 Ofsted Framework for the inspection of local authority arrangements for the protection of children states: Child protection does not begin at the point of referral to children's social care. Early identification and early help are firmly within the scope of the inspection of child protection services. A key part of the inspection framework will be considering the effectiveness of these services in identifying children and young people who may be at risk, and the degree to which agencies work together to identify problems and offer effective help early, without the need for a formal referral to social care.
12. Following the publication of the Early Help officer document, the national "Working Together to Safeguard Children Guidance March 2013" has been revised to bring it into line with the new emphasis on Early Help, the concept of which was used extensively in the Munro Report on improving social work first published in 2011.
13. Working Together to Safeguard Children Guidance March 2013 states: Providing early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later. Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life, from the foundation through to teenage years.

**The Offer**

14. The Council's "Early Help Offer" is entitled "Early Help for all who need it".
15. The document outlines the commitment to Early Help for all Children, Young people and their families, which supports the four priority areas of Improved Educational Attainment, Protecting Vulnerable Children, Early Help and Improving Life Chances and Being Healthy and Positive.
16. It goes on to outline how professionals can identify the children and families who would benefit from early help, and then how services can be accessed.
17. The Early Help offer is outlined through key service areas. The use of evidenced based approaches and programmes is also discussed.

18. A more detailed list of support is then outlined, however this should not be treated as a definitive list, as available services change in response to the identified needs of families.
19. The Practitioner Guidelines for accessing Early Help are then included. This contains a pre-assessment checklist, and detailed guidance on completing the Early Help (CAF) Form, the role of the Lead Professional and the Team around the Child, along with a flowchart, as well as the actual Assessment Form.
20. The final part of the offer involves the “Step Up and Step Down Process” as families access the system and Guidance for additional support when a case is being closed to Social Care or needs to be referred to Social Care for more intensive support. This is also being amended to include Stepping Down from the Troubled Families Programme.
21. The Early Help Offer which comprises a full list of provision, application forms, telephone contacts list etc., is on the Central Bedfordshire website, in both the Families and Professionals sections. The link to the entries on the website are <http://centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/learning/schools/support-for-professionals/common-assessment-framework.aspx> and <http://centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/learning/schools/support-for-families/default.aspx>
22. Extracts from the guidance relevant to the Council’s policy are attached at Appendix A for Members to comment on.

## **Appendix A: Extracts from Guidance**

**Background Papers:** (open to public inspection) - Nil