

CABINET

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“A BETTER START” BIG LOTTERY BID

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Mike O'Brien, Children's Services (Lead Member)

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Summary

This report updates Cabinet on the development of the “A Better Start” Big Lottery Bid. It outlines the work undertaken through the Area Partnership Board to develop the bid and the outcome of the Strategy Days facilitated by Dartington in January. The bid is currently being drafted based on the information presented in this report.

The closing date for the bid is 28 February 2014 and Cabinet is asked to delegate authority to the Director of Public Health and the Director of Children and Adults Services in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services to approve the bid for submission.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

- 1.1 Medway has been successful in reaching the final stage of the “A Better Start” Big Lottery bid which aims to improve outcomes for children and would bring circa £40m over 10 years to enable a systematic change to services to provide a preventative approach in pregnancy and early years and reduce the incidence of health and social problems later in life.
- 1.2 This proposal supports the Council Plan priority of “Children and young people having the best start in life”. It also supports the Health and Wellbeing Board's strategic theme “Give every child a good start.”
- 1.3 Through its impact on school readiness the proposal also supports the Council's responsibilities for school improvement and provision of 'early help'.

2. Development of the A Better Start Bid

- 2.1 The Big Lottery, “A Better Start” programme, aims to improve the physical, emotional and psychological foundations built during a child's first few years. The start a child gets in life can have a big impact on their development, with

the first three years profoundly influencing their life chances. Nurturing babies and toddlers at this pivotal early stage can make the difference between their future success and happiness or a very different life story. The programme aims to improve three outcomes:

- Nutrition
- Communication and language development
- Social and emotional development

In the longer term these will reduce the incidence of a range of costly health and social problems.

- 2.2 Bids must be submitted by a voluntary sector organisation on behalf of a partnership including the local authority. The Medway bid is led by Family Action which is a national organisation providing practical, emotional and financial support to isolated and disadvantaged families including in Medway. The bid is required to focus on wards with the greatest need and Chatham Central, Gillingham North and South wards and Luton & Wayfield have been selected. Although benefits from the programme will extend beyond the four wards and can be scaled up to have an impact across Medway.
- 2.3 An Area Partnership Board chaired by the Chief Executive of Medway Council was established to lead development of the bid and engage partners in developing the bid. Significant work has been undertaken through the Area Partnership Board through four work programmes.
- 2.4 Community Engagement
This has been a vital element of ensuring that the bid reflects the needs of local people. Throughout December 2013, A Better Start for Children Community Engagement Board undertook a community consultation to seek the experiences of parents and carers with children under four years old who access local services and from the providers, managers and stakeholders of those services. The consultation was carried out through a survey on the 'A Better Start for Children' website (www.medwaybetterstart.co.uk) and in the community, supported by the voluntary sector, children's centres and midwives. 177 surveys were completed and thirteen focus groups took place with 91 parents and carers. Participants were asked to share their experiences of local services and what other services they would have found useful.

Key themes from the consultation included:

- Volunteers / Support Workers to begin work with parents in pregnancy and throughout the early years of their child's life
- More face to face time/human contact with professionals across all agencies to ask relevant questions, including on the maternity ward before being sent home.
- Better support to help mothers sustain breastfeeding beyond the early days of their child's life, which begins on the maternity ward following delivery
- Up to date information that is readily available and provides details of local services, who to contact with minor concerns and information

about each stage of their child's development – accessed using a mobile phone app or one website

- Information on child care, benefits, returning to work or education
- Training for service providers to ensure advice is consistent across services and up to date
- Parenting classes at appropriate stages to address all areas of development, challenging behaviour, nutrition, home safety etc
- Co-located multi-disciplinary teams
- A volunteer babysitting program to provide safe, reliable childcare
- Free / low cost opportunities for families to socialise in the community.

An area wellbeing survey was commissioned by Big Lottery in all 15 of the local authority sites in the final stage of the bidding process. This involved interviewing 600 families with children under 8 years in Medway. It provided an overview of key developmental outcomes and risk factors in the target wards in Medway plus comparison with other sites. Surprisingly the target wards did not always perform worse than Medway as a whole. The one factor which was significantly higher in the target wards was poor social cohesion

2.5 Wellbeing research, evidence and science

This work programme reviewed the evidence for effective interventions in pregnancy and early years to improve outcomes for children. It was supported by frontline practitioners and the three universities in Medway. A range of interventions have been prioritised for the bid including:

- Family Nurse Partnership (FNP) – a structured home visiting programme for first time mothers under 20 years of age; expansion to cover the ~60% who are eligible but not currently receiving the service
- Minding the Baby - NSPCC programme for vulnerable mothers under 25 which would compliment the FNP
- Family Action Perinatal Support Project - volunteer befrienders for women experiencing anxiety and depression
- Grow Together – an innovative programme in Medway which identifies children who may need extra support to be ready for nursery and provides play based interventions.
- Increasing uptake of Healthy Start Vitamins (2% uptake in eligible children in Medway)
- Use of Video Interaction Guidance – this has been used with older children in Medway and this technique could be applied to supporting parent child interaction in early years.

2.6 Fund mapping

A key element of the Better Start programme is the opportunity to shift funding that is used for the treatment and management of health and social problems into preventative programmes. This workstream has mapped current expenditure for children across the Council, NHS and voluntary sector in Medway and the four target wards. This has allowed a baseline to be established and to allow consideration of how funding could be reprofiled over the course of the programme.

2.7 Communications

The communications workstream has ensured that effective communication with the community and partners has supported development of the bid. A pathway to childhood wellbeing has been designed to engage parents and professionals in reviewing current services and identifying opportunities to change.

2.8 Strategy Days

The work led by the Area Partnership Board to develop the bid with partners culminated in two strategy days on January 20 and 21. These were an integral part of developing the bid with our partners and were facilitated by the Social Research Unit at Dartington. The output of these days was a Strategy Document produced by Dartington outlining Medway's vision and ambition in improving outcomes for children. A first draft of this document has been received and will inform the bid which is currently being written. Key elements of the document include:

A focus on two outcomes

- (i) Improved physical health and development for our children. Focusing on: Healthy gestation and birth, breastfeeding, neuro-motor skills, diet, exercise and obesity.
- (ii) Improved behaviour and social development in our children. Focusing on: Behaviour, self regulation, social skills and relationship skills.

Achieved through:

- Strengthening relationships between family members; community members; families and service providers; and the agencies working with families
- Community and family empowerment through skill and capacity building
- A network of buddies to provide support to families
- Delivery of an evidence based portfolio of interventions
- Maximizing the use of new technology to provide information and support behaviour change
- Developing effective multidisciplinary teams working from Children's Centres
- A centre of excellence to drive service improvement, evaluate our achievements and support parents and practitioners in providing effective interventions
- Making better use of Medway's green spaces and play areas to increase physical activity and support social engagement.
- System reform to increase investment in prevention. Dartington have advised that a 2% shift in expenditure towards evidence based preventative interventions would achieve improved outcomes for children
- Underpinned by robust governance arrangements with parents as partners and a local evaluation programme which complements the national programme evaluation.

3. Next steps

- 3.1 Based on the work described in section 2 the bid is currently being drafted by Family Action and will be reviewed by the Area Partnership Board on 29 January. The submission date to Big Lottery is 28 February.

4. Risk management

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
The bid is unsuccessful	The “A Better Start” is a competitive process and Medway may not be successful in achieving funding.	Ensure adequate support is given to completing the bid. If the bid is unsuccessful the work will generate proposals for shifting towards a more preventative approach which can be taken forward locally.	

5. Consultation

- 5.1 Significant consultation has been undertaken with parents and stakeholders throughout the development of the bid and will be an integral part of the implementation plan if successful.

6. Financial implications

- 6.1 The development of the bid has been funded by a grant of £264,500 from Big Lottery which is held by Family Action.
- 6.2 There are no specific financial implications arising from the report however development and implementation of the bid will require a shift of resources by partners towards preventative programmes which will improve outcomes for children in Medway resulting in reduced expenditure on other interventions.

7. Legal implications

- 7.1 The decision to submit a bid for “A Better Start” to the Big Lottery is one for Cabinet. By virtue of section 9E (3) Local Government Act 2000, Cabinet may lawfully delegate its functions to officers as recommended in this report. .

8. Recommendations

- 8.1 Cabinet is asked to agree the outline of the bid described in the paper.
- 8.2 Cabinet is asked to delegate authority to the Director of Public Health and the Director of Children and Adults Services in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Children’s Services (Lead Member) to approve the final version of the bid and submit it to the Big Lottery.

9. Suggested reasons for decision(s)

- 9.1 The bid provides a significant opportunity to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for children in Medway. The timeline between the strategy days and the submission date has not offered an opportunity to bring the final bid to Cabinet for approval.

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Background papers

None