

## **CABINET**

**2 FEBRUARY 2021**

### **EARLY HELP (PARENTING) TASK GROUP**

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Mrs Josie Iles, Portfolio Holder for Children's Services  
(Lead Member)

Report from: Ian Sutherland, Director of People – Children and Adults

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#### **Summary**

The Task Group have made twelve recommendations which are aimed at developing parenting support in Medway from a universal offer that is easily accessible by all to more targeted support services where needed. The vision is for parenting support to be delivered in a cohesive way, consistently applied by all agencies across Medway and to be accessed without stigma or difficulty in access.

This report asks the Cabinet to consider the final report of the Early Help (Parenting) Task Group and agree the recommendations.

The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the report at its meeting held on 7 January 2021 and Members' comments are set in section 6 of the report.

#### **1. Budget and policy framework**

- 1.1. Under Chapter 4 of the Constitution (Part 5 – Overview and Scrutiny Rules - paragraph 21.1 (xviii), each overview and scrutiny committee has the responsibility to appoint time limited Task Groups to undertake in-depth reviews within the overall programme of reviews agreed each year by the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee and to make recommendations to the Council and Leader and Cabinet as appropriate. The topic of this review is within the remit of this Committee.
- 1.2. The recommendations arising from the review are consistent with the Council's Policy Framework and will contribute to the development of a forthcoming Parenting Support Strategy.

## 2. Background

- 2.1. In June 2011 the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to exercise a more pro-active role than previously in prioritising the programme of indepth scrutiny review work. This followed a Council decision that a maximum of three reviews or themed meetings can be undertaken annually across all four Overview and Scrutiny Committees, in light of shrinking capacity across the organisation. This represented a shift from the previous position of multiple Task Groups, with no fixed timelines, running at any one time.
- 2.2. In line with best practice, the Committee also decided to adopt a more systematic approach to the selection of topics, with nominations submitted by each Committee, taking into account suggestions and advice from Directors.
- 2.3. This review was not part of the programme of in-depth scrutiny reviews approved by Members in November 2017 but was agreed by the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 2 July 2020, following a recommendation from this committee that the next task group focus on a topic relating to Early Help which would contribute to the Children's Social Care Improvement journey.
- 2.4. The membership of the Task Group comprised Councillors Kemp (Chairman), Cooper, Johnson, Thorne and Mrs Elizabeth Turpin.

## 3. Scope of the review

- 3.1. The task group agreed the following key lines of enquiry:
  - 3.1.1. To hear from Medway families in relation to what they need from parenting support and how they wish to receive messages about what is on offer and being developed?
  - 3.1.2. To consider national context in relation to the parenting support element of Early Help and what a good strategy and good offer looks like?
  - 3.1.3. To review what exists already across the Medway landscape and whether the offer for parents in Medway is clear and joined up and meets the identified needs?
  - 3.1.4. To review whether work around early help and parenting is joined up?
  - 3.1.5. To review how unmet need can be addressed through parenting support?
  - 3.1.6. To review whether wider partners are engaged in the vision for parenting, such as the education and health sectors?

## 4. Methodology

- 4.1. The methodology adopted by the Task Group is set out in its report, attached at Appendix 1.
- 4.2. A Diversity Impact Assessment will be completed when the Parenting Support Strategy is drafted.

## 5. Findings and conclusions of the Task Group

- 5.1. The Task Group have made twelve recommendations, based on its findings which it believes will work to develop and strengthen Medway's approach to and supply of parenting support across Medway at all levels of need. The findings and recommendations are set out in full within the Task Group's report, attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

## 6. Comments from the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 6.1. The Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the report at its meeting held on 7 January 2021.
- 6.2. At the meeting the task group members thanked officers for their support and paid particular tribute to the parents who had engaged with the task group and shared their personal experiences which had been very valuable and it was suggested that senior officers review the evidence submitted.
- 6.3. The Committee forwarded the Task Group report, as attached at Appendix 1 to the report, to the Cabinet for approval.

## 7. Risk management

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
Lack of engagement of stakeholders	The recommendations and strategy need to be owned across Medway partners or the outcomes for families will not improve	The Task Group engaged a wide range of partners as part of the review and their findings are reflected in the recommendations. Officers will work across statutory and non-statutory partners to develop the strategy and	D2

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
		ensure it is embedded.	
Strategy doesn't become embedded	It is important that the strategy becomes embedded so that the culture of parenting support improves across Medway.	The recommendation that the strategy should have regular review points and contains clear short, medium and long term outcomes will help to ensure that the strategy remains a "live" document.	D2
Specialist services do not have capacity to deliver parenting support	With increasing rates of referrals into Health and Social Care services, the capacity to deliver parenting support programmes may reduce.	The recommendations focus on the need to deliver more universal support services at the earliest point of need to reduce pressure on more specialist services. This universal support can be delivered in a range of settings such as Education and Early Years, Public Health nursing and Early help.	D2

## 8. Financial implications

- 8.1. There are no known financial implications associated with this report.
- 8.2. The report identifies that there are many services in place throughout Medway to support parents and families. As identified within the report, a key aim of the parenting strategy will be to better coordinate and utilise existing resources to secure positive outcomes for children and families.
- 8.3. The report also identifies some areas where the development of additional parental support resource is required, for example supporting parents of children and young people with neurodevelopmental conditions.

8.4. Any requirement for additional resource input will be driven by the parenting support strategy in consultation with partners across Medway, rather than as a direct result of this report.

## 9. Legal implications

9.1. There are no known legal implications associated with this report.

## 10. Recommendations

10.1. The Cabinet is asked to consider the comments of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee set out at section 6 to the report.

10.2. The Cabinet is asked to agree the recommendations made by the Early Help (Parenting) Task Group, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

## 11. Suggested Reasons for Decisions

11.1. The recommendations, as agreed by the Task Group, aim to help develop parenting support in Medway from a universal offer that is easily accessible by all, to more targeted support services where needed. The vision is for parenting support to be delivered in a cohesive way, consistently applied by all agencies across Medway and to be accessed without stigma or difficulty in access.

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## Appendices

Appendix 1 – Early Help Task Group report

## Background papers

None.