

Equality Impact Assessment

Provide basic details

Name of proposal/activity/policy to be assessed

Reading's Early Help Strategy

Directorate: DESSH

Service: Children's Services

Name and job title of person doing the assessment

Name: Emily Hodges

Job Title: Service Transformation Officer

Date of assessment: September 2013

Scope your proposal

What is the aim of your policy or new service?

Reading's Early Help Strategy sets out the vision and areas of development across the range of services that provide early help for families in Reading, broadly covering those services below the threshold of Children's Social Care or very specialist interventions.

The Strategy is produced in the context of a number of national studies, reports and reviews that reinforce the effectiveness of Early Help in promoting the welfare of children. This runs alongside the challenges of Reading's local context, which includes a large and growing child population, increasing diversity, and narrowing but persistent variations in outcomes in health and education.

Reading has previously had an Early Years Strategy, but this is Reading's first all-age Early Help Strategy, which aims to set the high-level vision and priorities across a broad range of services to provide an Early Help offer.

Significant progress has already been and there are many strengths to Reading's current Early Help services; this strategy sets out how we aims to build on this to develop greater joint working and improved consistency, ensuring we identify needs and provide support as early as possible to improve outcomes and reduce costs.

Work to produce the Early Help Strategy began in March 2013. The Strategy is structured around five priorities:

- Early Identification and Assessment of Need
- Effective Early Help for Children and Families
- Supporting the Most Vulnerable and Sustaining the Change

- Listening to and Involving Children and Families
- Quality of Practice

The Strategy is informed by the analysis of demographic, need and performance data; national best practice; and feedback from stakeholder - including over 200 interviews with local parents as part of our 'Transforming Early Years' project.

A number of key stakeholders across Reading Borough Council and other key partners such as in health services and the voluntary sector were involved in shaping the draft Strategy. This was then finalised following a three month consultation with a wider range of internal and external partners and parents, carers and young people.

Who will benefit from this proposal and how?

Primarily the Strategy should benefit all children, young people and families across Reading, with a particular focus on those most in need of some additional support. The key benefits from the Strategy will be:

- Easier access to early help support when a need is identified
- An increasingly consistent and more integrated range of early help support across different services and agencies
- Addressing gaps in current support for some groups, such as children or young people with a parent in prison
- Improved targeting of support to ensure the most vulnerable families benefit as early as possible
- Support for families to lead healthier lives and realise their potential, regardless of their background

Who are the main stakeholders and what do they want?

- Children, young people and their families
- Reading Borough Council staff within early help services and connected services
- Partners across the statutory and voluntary sectors who are integral to the Council's early help services

Impact of the Proposal

Describe how this proposal could impact on Racial groups

There has been no negative impact identified from the proposal on different racial groups. However, the Strategy does contain actions to address Reading's increasingly diverse population, with a particular focus on ensuring services meet the needs of BME families and families with English as an Additional Language.

Is there a negative impact? Yes No Not sure

Describe how this proposal could impact on Gender/transgender (cover pregnancy and maternity, marriage)

There Early Help Strategy aims to set out actions to improve services and support for all children, young people and their families, regardless of gender. However, the Strategy does contain actions that are aimed particularly at improving outcomes for mothers, such as further embedding the Maternity Pathway to identify potentially vulnerable expectant mothers at their 12 week midwife appointment and provide additional support.

Is there a negative impact? Yes No Not sure

Describe how this proposal could impact on Disability

There has been no negative impact identified in the proposal because of disability. The Strategy does contain specific details on the support currently available to families where a either a child or an adult has an disability, and key actions improve these services - this includes work to implement a life-long disability service to provide more integrated, holistic support.

Is there a negative impact? Yes No Not sure

Describe how this proposal could impact on Sexual orientation (cover civil partnership)

No negative impact in terms of sexual orientation has been identified from this proposal.

Is there a negative impact? Yes No Not sure

Describe how this proposal could impact on Age

Unlike the Early Years Strategy which focused on children 0-5 years old, the Early Help Strategy sets out the actions to improve support to children of all ages. The Strategy does contain specific actions around support to Teenage Parents, recognising that these parents are likely to need additional support - this includes the embedding the evidence-based Family Nurse Partnership as support for first-time teenage mothers.

Is there a negative impact? Yes No Not sure

Describe how this proposal could impact on Religious belief?

No negative impact in terms of religious belief has been identified from this proposal. The Strategy does not contain any actions that relate specifically to different religious beliefs, but services will respond to the needs of children, young people and families and communities as required - working with local faith groups, for example.

Is there a negative impact? Yes No Not sure

Decision

- 1. No negative impact identified Go to sign off
- 2. Negative impact identified but there is a justifiable reason
- 3. Negative impact identified or uncertain

No impacts have been identified in relation to any of the above groups and we have no evidence or reason to believe that any staff may be affected differently than others.

Signed (completing officer)

Date

Signed (Lead Officer)

Date