
Progress Report - Priority 3: Help Families and Children in Early Years

Report being considered by: Health and Wellbeing Board
On: 7 December 2023
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Item for: Discussion



1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 The Berkshire West Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JLHWS) sets out five priorities:

- (1) Reduce the differences in health between different groups of people.
- (2) Support individuals at high risk of bad health outcomes to live healthy lives.
- (3) Help children and families in early years.
- (4) Promote good mental health and wellbeing for all children and young people.
- (5) Promote good mental health and wellbeing for all adults.

1.2 Each of the three Health and Wellbeing Boards within the Berkshire West 'Place' has developed its own Delivery Plan to address these shared priorities, tailoring the approach to their particular needs and circumstances.

1.3 A rolling programme of reports will update the Health and Wellbeing Board on progress in implementing the actions set out in West Berkshire's Delivery Plan for each of the above priorities. This report focuses on the third priority: *help families and children in early years*.

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1 The Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to:

- (1) note the report and the progress made to date;
- (2) consider if the actions are still appropriate, if existing actions need to be updated, or if additional actions are required;
- (3) agree any actions to be referred upwards to the 'Place' or 'System' levels;
- (4) commit their respective organisations to delivering the agreed actions.

3. Executive Summary

3.1 This report relates to actions in the JLHWS Delivery Plan that relate to the priority *help families and children in early years*. It presents the progress that has been made

since the Strategy was adopted in December 2021 and highlights key deliverables that will be targeted in the coming year. It also identifies where actions would be more appropriate to be progressed by other partnerships operating at the 'Place' or 'System' level. A new Early Years Inequalities Group has been created to focus on early years provision bringing focus on that area which will bring significant value.

4. Supporting Information

- 4.1 Prevention and early help actions are key to positive health outcomes. The first 1,001 days, from pregnancy to the first two years of a child's life, are critical ages for development. This sensitive window sets the foundations for virtually every aspect of human development.
- 4.2 Inequities in child health and development start early. Not all children and families have the support they need for their children to be physically healthy, emotionally secure and ready to learn. Reasons for this are often social, including income and poor housing quality, and these factors can often accumulate over the lifecourse, having long term consequences on health and social outcomes such as educational attainment and employment. This is why it is so important to ensure we support families to provide as best a start as possible for their children.
- 4.3 The JLHWS identified a number of key improvements that needed to be made locally:
- (1) Supporting new parents, including single parents, in the transition to parenthood;
 - (2) Ensuring access to effective interventions throughout the first 2 years of a child's life;
 - (3) Guaranteeing affordability and timeliness of services during and after Covid-19.
- 4.4 The Strategy set out the following objectives under this priority:
- Work to provide support for parents and carers, during pregnancy and the early years, to improve personal and collective resilience using research and good practice.
 - Ensure families and parents have access to right and timely information and support for early years health. Working with midwifery, Family Hubs, healthy visiting and school nursing to improve the health, wellbeing, developmental and educational outcomes for all children.
 - Increase the number of two-year olds (who experience disadvantage) accessing nursery places. Ensure that our early years settings staff are trained in trauma-informed practice and care, know where to find information or help, and can signpost families properly.
 - Publish clear guidelines on how families can access financial help, including for childcare costs; tackling stigma around this issue where it occurs.
- 4.5 The Delivery Plan set out a range of actions designed to achieve the above objectives. In addition to the work of the Children's Early Help and Prevention Partnership a new group, the Early Years Inequalities Group has been created to

focus on early years provision. Good progress has been made and many of the original actions have now been completed as set out in Appendix A. Some of the key actions are highlighted below:

- 3.1.2 We have enhanced the Midwifery, Health Visitor and Children's Services liaison meeting to identify children and families at early help at the earliest opportunity.
- 3.2.1 We have mapped parenting provision in West Berkshire identifying any gaps in provision
- 3.2.4 We have developed and promoted Parental Conflict training and resources to those involved in providing Early Help across agencies
- 3.2.5 We have worked with the wider partnership to address gaps in parenting provision by providing training and resources to partners to deliver parenting groups
- 3.3.1 We have undertaken a self-assessment of Early Help in West Berkshire to identify strengths and areas for development and submitted this to the DLUHC.
- 3.3.5 We have developed a Family First assessment that assesses and intervenes with families who require more enhanced early help support thereby providing support at an earlier stage and avoiding statutory intervention.

4.6 Further progress is expected with some of the above actions, with work also starting on a number of new / amended actions. Current priorities include:

- 3.2.2 Updating the West Berkshire Directory with Parenting information to ensure professionals and parents can access courses.
- 3.2.3 Creating parenting information on West Berkshire Council website that enables parents to identify the most suitable type of parenting support available to them linking back to the Directory.
- 3.3.2 Piloting and then evaluating an Early Help digital referral form that can be used across the partnership.
- 3.3.3 Supporting the review and update of My Family Plan as a tool that can be used across the Early Help system to drive the early help practice.
- 3.3.4 Supporting the review the role of Family Hubs in the Early Help system in light of the Social Care Review recommendations.

4.7 The Delivery Plan was reviewed in Quarter 1 of 2023/24. As part of this process, a number of actions were identified for deletion due to: being complete; now being considered 'business as usual' activity; a lack of budget / resources; or not being an agreed action. Further details are provided in Appendix A.

- 4.8 As part of the review process, a number of Delivery Plan actions have been identified as being more appropriate for delivery at the Place or System levels, and have been escalated accordingly, however, none of these relate to Priority 3.

5. Options Considered

- 5.1 All actions have been reviewed by the Children Early Help and Prevention Partnership Group to understand:
- if they are still relevant;
 - if they have the necessary support, resources and budget;
 - if they are completed and should be removed;
 - if they represent business as usual activity that will be delivered through existing business / service plans;
 - if actions would be best delivered at the 'Place' or 'System' level;
 - if additional actions are needed to respond to circumstances that have changed since the Delivery Plan was first adopted.
- 5.2 The Health and Wellbeing Board may choose to accept the changes or make recommendations for further changes.

6. Proposal(s)

The Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to:

- consider if the actions designed to deliver Priority 3 of the JLHWS are still appropriate, if existing actions need to be updated, or if additional actions are required;
- consider if any actions would be better delivered at 'Place' or 'System' levels;
- commit their respective organisations to delivering the action plan.

7. Conclusion(s)

This report provides the Board with assurance that Delivery Plan actions around the JLHWS priority *help children and families in early years* are being delivered and updated and note that Early Years Inequalities Group will drive the agenda around early years.

8. Consultation and Engagement

- 8.1 The Health and Wellbeing Board Steering Group has been consulted on this report.

9. Appendices

Appendix A – Priority 3 Delivery Plan

Appendix B – Case Studies: Early Response Hub, Parenting Provision

Background Papers:

[Berkshire West Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021-2030](#)

Health and Wellbeing Priorities Supported:

The proposals will support the following Health and Wellbeing Strategy priorities:

- Reduce the differences in health between different groups of people
- Support individuals at high risk of bad health outcomes to live healthy lives
- Help families and young children in early years
- Promote good mental health and wellbeing for all children and young people
- Promote good mental health and wellbeing for all adults

The proposals contained in this report will support the above Health and Wellbeing Strategy priorities by ensuring that the JLHWS Delivery Plan actions are delivered and regularly reviewed.
