

Public Report
Improving Lives Select Commission

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Improving Lives Select Commission – 06 December 2022

Report Title

Outcomes from the review of the draft Early Help Strategy (2023 – 2028).

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

No

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Jo Brown, Assistant Chief Executive

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Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

On 21 September 2022, Members of Improving Lives Select Committee (ILSC) met to review the draft Early Help Strategy 2023-28 in advance of its submission to Cabinet. The aim of the ILSC meeting was to comment and influence the priorities, strategic direction and the delivery of the Early Help Strategy, as well as identifying challenges and potential solutions.

This report summarises the key points that arose from the discussions and outlines the recommendations arising from the ILSC meeting on 21 September 2022.

Recommendations

That Improving Lives Select Commission:

1. Notes the outcomes and recommendations of its review of the draft Early Help Strategy as outlined in the report.
2. Notes that the recommendations have been approved by Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (OSMB) and submitted to Cabinet for consideration.
3. Receives further updates on the progress and implementation of the Early Help Strategy as approved.

List of Appendices Included

- Appendix 1- Letter to Councillor Clark: Improving Lives Select Commission – consideration of the draft Early Help Strategy
- Appendix 2 – ILSC Draft Early Help Workshop Slides
- Appendix 3 – Summary of issues emerging from the workshop

Background Papers

None

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

None

Council Approval Required.

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Outcomes from the review of the draft Early Help Strategy (2023 – 2028).

1. Background

1.1 Having launched RMBC's previous Early Help Strategy (2016-2019) in January 2016, RMBC's Early Help Service a new Early Help Strategy (2023-2028) is being developed by stakeholder's and partners

1.2 The development of this strategy is an identified activity within the Year Ahead Delivery Plan 2022:

3.3. Develop and launch the refreshed Early Help Strategy

1.3 Following the development of a draft Early Help Strategy, it was agreed that Members of the ILSC would attend a workshop meeting to review it. The purpose of this meeting was to provide ILSC Members with an opportunity to scrutinise and comment on the draft Early Help strategy, prior to the final version being submitted to Cabinet for decision.

1.4 On 21 September 2022, a cross party group of ILSC Members and a co-optee met to consider the draft Early Help Strategy. The workshop was facilitated by David McWilliams (Assistant Director of Early Help, Family Engagement & Business Support) and Susan Claydon (Head of Early Help), with support from Governance Officers

1.5 Following its meeting, Cllr Pitchley (Chair of ILSC) wrote to Cllr Clark (Chair of OSMB) outlining the recommendations that had arisen from the discussions and asking Cllr Clark to submit these as part of OSMB's pre-decision scrutiny role (attached as Appendix 1). These recommendations are outlined in section **2.2**.

1.6 To ensure that Cabinet was able to consider the workshop's conclusions on a timely basis, recommendations were submitted to OSMB on 16 November 2022.

2. Key Issues

2.1 The session involved interactive discussions and presentations led by Early Help leads (the slides are attached for information as Appendix 2). An information pack containing the previous iteration of the strategy, the current draft and examples of other local authority early help offers was circulated in advance of the meeting.

Officers gave an overview of the draft Early Help Strategy 2023-28 and contextual information about the previous version. Officers facilitated two workshop exercises to generate feedback about the content and direction of the current draft. The participants reviewed what was working well across the Early Help service (including partnership working and information sharing) and feedback surrounding the ongoing challenges to be considered within the new strategy (for example the cost of living crisis and its impact on families).

Other issues considered included benchmarking activity across other local authorities to identify areas of good practice which could be reflected in the updated strategy. A summary of the issues raised in the discussion is attached as Appendix 3.

2.2 Drawing on the exercises and productive conversations arising from the meeting, a set of ten recommendations were made to inform the refreshed Early Help Strategy. These are outlined below:

1. That the strategy should reflect the following broad principles/priorities:
 - Children, young people & families at the heart of everything we do.
 - That early help is a shared partnership responsibility.
 - Right support, at the right time, in the right place.
 - Actions, plans, assessments and conversations should improve outcomes for the family.
 - Working in communities.
 - Early intervention.
2. That description of the Early Help offer is clear and understandable i.e what is the universal offer, what is the targeted offer?
3. That the strategy should articulate what constitutes basic needs and how this relates to the Early Help offer (referring to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs).
4. That any supporting action plan relating to the strategy has clear milestones, timescales, responsible individuals and expectations of outcomes.
5. That a commitment is made to strengthening the links between the Early Help offer and neighbourhood working and local ward members to ensure that early help is "everyone's business".
6. That consideration is given to publicising groups/peer support in local areas linked to community hubs via easy-to-navigate web pages or applications across partnership agencies.
7. That consideration is given to maximising eligibility and take-up of free school meals.
8. That the issue of parent/infant (perinatal) mental health care is reflected in the strategy.
9. That the partnership gives consideration to the learning and development offer required to support the refreshed strategy including how this is rolled out to schools, health, voluntary sector organisations and other key partners.
10. That the document is designed for a professional audience with an easy-to-read version available for the public.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

3.1 As an information report, there are no alternative options or proposals to consider.

3.2 It is recommended that Improving Lives Select Commission:

1. Notes the outcomes and recommendations of its review of the draft Early Help Strategy as outlined in the report.
2. Notes that the recommendations have been approved by Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and submitted to Cabinet for consideration.
3. Receives further updates on the progress and implementation of the Early Help Strategy as approved.

4. Consultation on proposal

4.1 All papers supporting this item are published on the Council's website. Whilst there is no consultation required as a result of the scrutiny activity in respect of this item, the service will continue to undertake consultation on service developments as required.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

5.1 The recommendations arising from this activity have been forwarded to the service for consideration as part of the final strategy. This will be considered by Cabinet in due course.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications (to be written by the relevant Head of Finance and the Head of Procurement on behalf of s151 Officer)

6.1 There are no financial implications directly arising from this item. Any recommendations which may have financial or procurement implications will be considered as part of the Cabinet decision.

7. Legal Advice and Implications (to be written by Legal Officer on behalf of Assistant Director Legal Services)

7.1 There are no legal implications directly arising from this item. Any recommendations which may have legal implications will be considered as part of the Cabinet decision.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

8.1 Any human resources implications arising from this item will be considered as part of the Cabinet decision.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

- 9.1 The final Early Help Strategy will have a positive impact on children, young people across the Borough supporting early intervention, partnership working and best practice. The recommendations arising from ILSC's scrutiny activity will contribute to the overall content and direction of the strategy.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

- 10.1 Any recommendations emerging from this item which have direct equalities and human rights implications will be considered as part of the Cabinet decision

11. Implications for CO₂ Emissions and Climate Change

- 11.1 There are no implications for CO₂ emissions or climate change.

12. Implications for Partners

- 12.1 Any recommendations emerging from this item which have implications for key partners will be forwarded to the relevant agency for consideration and response.

13. Risks and Mitigation

- 13.1 Risks and mitigations will be detailed in full as part of the Cabinet decision.

Accountable Officer(s)

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