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Our Ref:
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26 October 2022

Cllr Maggi Clark, Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Management Board
via email: maggi.clark@rotherham.gov.uk

cc Cllr Cusworth, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services
Suzy Joyner, Strategic Director, Children and Young People's Services
David McWilliams, Assistant Director, Early Help and Family Engagement
Susan Claydon, Head of Locality and Family Support Strategic Lead
Emma Hill, Head of Democratic Services

Dear Cllr Clark

Improving Lives Select Commission – consideration of the draft Early Help Strategy

As you are aware, Members of Improving Lives Select Commission (ILSC) met on 21 September 2022 to consider the draft Early Help Strategy in advance of its submission to Cabinet. The purpose of the meeting was to comment and influence the priorities, strategic direction and the delivery of the Early Help 'offer', identifying challenges and potential solutions. As such, having an opportunity to scrutinise this important work at an earlier stage was very welcome and received positively by Members. I am grateful for your attendance and participation at the workshop and I'm sure you will agree it was a fruitful discussion.

I would like to thank David McWilliams and Susan Claydon from the Early Help and Family Engagement Service and Governance Officers for facilitating the workshop.

As you are aware, the ILSC meeting to be held on 25 October will not be considering formal business and therefore will not be able to ratify our recommendations prior to the Cabinet meeting in November. A short report summarising the key points arising from the discussions and recommendations will be submitted to the next available meeting of ILSC which is scheduled for 6 December 2022.

In order that the Cabinet is able to consider the workshop's conclusions on a timely basis, I am writing to request the following recommendations are submitted to the OSMB meeting to be held on 16 November 2022 as part of its pre-decision scrutiny role.

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 and with communities.
 - Early intervention.
2. That the 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.

I am grateful if you can confirm that the recommendations will be included in OSMB's feedback to Cabinet. Should you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me or Caroline Webb, Senior Governance Advisor (caroline.webb@rotherham.gov.uk).

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Cllr Lyndsay Pitchley

Cllr Lyndsay Pitchley
Chair of Improving Lives Select Commission