

Education Scrutiny Committee

Meeting to be held on Tuesday, 3 March 2020

Electoral Division affected: (All Divisions);
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Early Years Strategy 2020- 2023

(Appendices 'A' to 'C' refer)

Contact for further information:

Sarah Callaghan, Tel: 01772 538956, Director of Education and Skills

sarah.callaghan@lancashire.gov.uk

Executive Summary

As an action from the Education Scrutiny Committee meeting on 22 July 2019, this is an update from the Director of Education and Skills on the development of an Early Years strategy.

Recommendation

The Education Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider the information presented and provide appropriate feedback.

Background and Advice

1.1 Our vision for the strategy is that all our children, young people and their families are safe, healthy and achieve their full potential. Hence we have taken a real partnership approach in identifying the priority areas which we believe will get the best outcomes and reduce inequalities for our children, young people and families across Lancashire.

1.2 For the purposes of this strategy, early years is from pre-birth to five years old. This broad definition of early years is in recognition of the importance of a healthy pregnancy, good parenting and high quality education and childcare in influencing outcomes, and that the move into primary school is a critical period in all children's lives. Many aspects of this strategy are equally relevant to children beyond the age of five.

1.3 The strategy will ensure:

- a preventative and early intervention approach that supports children, young people and families to build resilience and take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing;
- children get the best start in life so they are able to learn and develop resilience, capability, confidence and self-assurance through positive relationships;

- building of community capacity to promote health and wellbeing using local assets;
- shared leadership and a joined-up approach to commissioning which is committed to driving real action and change to reduce inequalities and improve education, health and wellbeing outcomes for babies, children and young people living in Lancashire.

1.4 We are working with Public Health and other services to help achieve the best possible start in life recognising that development begins before birth. As Professor Sir Michael Marmot stated: 'The foundations for virtually every aspect of human development – physical, intellectual and emotional – are laid in early childhood. What happens during these early years has lifelong effects on many aspects of health and well-being. We have therefore focussed our strategy on 4 key priority areas:

1. To ensure better maternal and child outcomes throughout pregnancy, birth and beyond.
2. To ensure children families and communities are school ready and schools ready for children.
3. To ensure improved health and wellbeing outcomes through the Healthy Child programme.
4. To target inequalities and improve outcomes in the areas of greatest need.

1.5 The strategy has been approved by the Children, Young People and Families Partnership Board and is now in a 'final' draft version as at Appendix 'A'. Provided at Appendix 'B' is the Early Years Strategy 'plan on a page' and at Appendix 'C', a copy of the presentation to be discussed, is included.

Consultations

2.1 The strategy has been developed with partners from Public Health, Virgin Care, Education Improvement (early years), the Inclusion Service and Children and Family Well-being service. The development of the strategy has been led by Helen Belbin (Early Years Senior Adviser) and Ruksana Sarsar-Akram (Interim Public Health Consultant).

2.2 The strategy has been approved by the Children, Young People and Families Partnership Board and is now in a 'final' draft version.

2.3 Feedback on the strategy will also be sought as part of the LGA Peer Review scheduled for 24 – 27 March 2020.

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Risk management

Financial

3.1 Lancashire County Council, amongst one third of other local authorities, is on the lowest level of funding for Early Years. This could impact on the capacity within the system to deliver this strategy. As committee members will be aware we are providing intensive support for maintained nursery schools to ensure their financial viability; whilst also lobbying government for sustainable funding for the sector overall. Private nurseries, which make up the bulk of our provision are also under the same financial constraints and are suffering similar challenges.

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

List of Background Papers

N/A

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A