



**Buckinghamshire
Children & Young
People's Partnership**

Working together to reach our goals

Buckinghamshire's Early Help Partnership Strategy, 2022 - 25 Consultation Outcome Report

Education Directorate, Children's Services

9 Feb 2022 v7

Table of Contents

Buckinghamshire’s Early Help Partnership Strategy, 2022 - 25 Consultation Outcome Report	
Introduction	3
Background	3
Purpose of report	3
Consultation process	3
Methodology	4
Planning and research to inform the engagement	4
Pre engagement	4
Public consultation	4
Communications	5
Summary of consultation responses	5
Profile of respondents.....	5
Headline data	6
Feedback by priority.....	7
Additional or alternative suggestions	10
Children and young people’s feedback.....	12
Conclusion and next steps	15

Introduction

The draft Early Help Partnership Strategy 2022 – 25 was developed as a continuation of the existing strategy, building on the successes of the past 3 years, and identifying areas for improvement and development; this was both in terms of strengthening the partnership approach, and responding to the emerging needs because of the pandemic. The strategy proposed 4 new priorities to take forward, developed following engagement with key stakeholders. This engagement included dialogue with professionals working with children, young people and their families, parent/carer representatives, and children and young people themselves.

Background

The draft Early Help Partnership Strategy that was consulted upon:

- Outlined the partnership vision and principles for all children and young people in Buckinghamshire.
- Provided a definition of Early Help and the importance of joint working to achieve outcomes.
- Detailed the increasing demand for Early Help and the primary reasons families seek support.
- Summarised the views of children, young people and families about the support they had received, and where more support was needed.
- Identified 4 priorities for the next 3 years and outlined a potential governance structure.

Purpose of report

This report will:

- detail the Early Help Partnership Strategy consultation process and outputs
- outline response numbers, types and key themes
- identify next steps to complete the Strategy.

Consultation process

In carrying out this consultation, the Council's corporate consultation process was followed. The project had four distinct stages:

- I. Planning and research to inform the engagement
- II. Pre-engagement work
- III. Public consultation
- IV. Consultation close and report.

Methodology

Planning and research to inform the engagement

Data analysis informed the development of the draft strategy that was shared during the consultation period. A number of strategies from other local authorities were also reviewed.

Pre engagement

Pre-engagement was comprehensive and included:

- An internal evaluation of progress against the existing Early Help Partnership Strategy conducted by the Council's Family Support Service management team.
- A joint evaluation of progress against the existing Early Help Partnership Strategy with key stakeholders. This was carried out using a standard template for partners to complete.
- Stakeholder focus groups to discuss findings and identify potential priorities for consultation. These events were well supported with 28 professionals attending 4 online discussion groups.
- Presentations delivered to the 18 School Liaison groups across Buckinghamshire as well as a specific focus group for schools to gain feedback from this key stakeholder to shape the draft strategy.
- A session delivered to children and young people during October half term 2021 to seek the views of this key group. This session was delivered to pupils in years 11,12 and 13 at the Grange School in Aylesbury at a Community Partnership resources day at the school.
- Discussion with 16 young people working with the Family Support Service
- Discussion with chair of the Children and Young People's Partnership Board to agree a proposed approach to the governance of the new strategy.

Public consultation

The Council set a 30-day period to hold the consultation, starting on 1 November 2021 and closing on 12 December 2021.

Public consultation was conducted through the Council's consultation hub. An online survey was produced. The survey design collected demographic data to allow analysis of the results by different groups of stakeholders. The survey was designed to allow stakeholders to be able to fully explain their responses and give in-depth feedback on the consultation. Respondents who were unable to access the online survey were able to request a printed questionnaire or submit an email response.

Opportunities for stakeholders to discuss the proposals directly with the Head of Early Help were provided. 3 online sessions were organised and promoted for this purpose, but due to low uptake, individual conversations were held with 3 interested parties (professionals and parents).

Communications

The Council wanted to hear from as many stakeholders as possible and the following methods were used to promote the consultation:

- Dedicated consultation hub webpage [Early Help Partnership Strategy Consultation 2021 - Your Voice Bucks - Citizen Space](#)
- Specific emails sent to key stakeholders to ensure all relevant parties were directly informed and invited to comment.
- Promotion via the Council’s social media pages (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, and Next Door) via corporate communications and the Buckinghamshire Family information Service (including Family Centre’s social media platforms).
- A press release launching the strategy consultation.
- A poster distributed in Buckinghamshire libraries
- An article in School’s bulletin
- Promotion via attendance at School Liaison Groups

Summary of consultation responses

Profile of respondents

20 online survey responses were submitted for consideration. While the level of formal consultation response is low, the extensive pre-engagement activity enabled a greater number of people to share their views on the draft strategy during the development stage.

	Number of respondents	%
A parent or carer of children/young people aged 25 or under	3	15
A professional who works with children, young people, and families	10	50
An official representative of an organisation in Buckinghamshire	4	20
Other (please specify)	3	15
Total	20	100

The 3 parent/carers who responded provided details of their 5 children who are aged under 2 or between 5 and 19 years. 2 children have special educational needs and disabilities. 1 child/young person is not in education.

Ages of children and young people	Total
Under 2	1
Primary Years 1- 6 (aged 5 -11)	1
Years 7 -11 (Secondary aged 11- 16)	1
Years 12-13 (Post-16 aged 16 -18)	1
Aged 19	1
Total	5

The 3 respondents categorised as “other” included a school governor, an employee of the Council’s Children’s Services, and a resident.

In addition to the above, 3 verbal responses from meetings with individuals have been included for consideration as well as 1 response received from a parent via social media. These are not included in the statistical tables throughout this document.

Headline data

The majority of respondents (75%) felt the draft strategy was “very easy” or “quite easy” to understand with a further 20% finding it “ok” to understand. 5% found the draft Strategy “quite difficult” to understand. To improve accessibility, suggestions were made to simplify the language, shorten the strategy, increase the font size and use a coloured (cream/yellow) background. There was also a suggestion to included practical examples of how the strategy would work in practice to enable families to better understand early help. More specific targets were also requested.

Is the draft Early Help Partnership Strategy easy to understand?		
	Number of respondents	%
Very easy	7	35
Quite easy	8	40
Ok	4	20
Quite difficult	1	5
Very difficult	-	-
I haven’t read it	-	-
Total	20	100

85% of respondents felt the summary document was “very easy” or “quite easy” to understand with a further 15% feeling it was “ok” to understand. Comments were similar to those summarised above, with the addition of 1 respondent suggesting a 1-page document would be helpful.

Is the draft Early Help Partnership Strategy summary document easy to understand?		
	Number of respondents	%
Very easy	9	45
Quite easy	8	40
Ok	3	15
Quite difficult	-	-
Very difficult	-	-
I haven't read it	-	-
Total	20	100

Feedback by priority

The following details the responses to the question "To what extent do you agree or disagree with the Strategy priorities?"

Priority 1: Strengthen multi-agency strategic governance and joint ownership of the Early Help Strategy

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the Strategy priority 1?		
	Number of respondents	%
Strongly agree	13	65
Agree	6	30
Neither agree nor disagree	-	-
Disagree	-	-
Strongly disagree	1	5
Total	20	100

95% "strongly agreed" or "agreed" with priority 1, with comments suggesting the partnership approach was welcomed. The respondent "strongly disagreeing" also "strongly disagreed" with the other 3 priorities, citing a lack of support/understanding from Early Help Services for children and young people with Autism.

1 respondent suggested including a specific focus on youth voice, perhaps through the creation of Youth Trustees to sit on the Early Help Partnership governance structures to advise and support from a young person's perspective.

1 respondent highlighted the importance of greater involvement of service leads from partner organisations in the governance and development of the strategy as:

"often where there may be strategic oversight from an organisation there can be missed opportunities for two way sharing of information and collaboration."

Priority 2 - Further develop the Early Help offer to include a targeted response to the increased risk of long-term disadvantage for children, young people, and families due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the Strategy priority 2?		
	Number of respondents	%
Strongly agree	11	55
Agree	7	35
Neither agree nor disagree	-	-
Disagree	1	5
Strongly disagree	1	5
Total	20	100

90% “strongly agreed” or “agreed” with priority 2, recognising the impact of the pandemic on families:

“I’m glad we are focusing on the effect of Covid - 19 as I think this will be the case for many settings and school and it’s important that this gets dealt with now appropriately, rather than further down the line when it’s too late.”

1 respondent suggested strengthening this priority further:

“It is good to see that the strategy has family effected by Covid-19 as a priority, however it would be good to see something specific around bereavement and trauma and also something about low level mental health and wellbeing – i.e., for those who may not be eligible for CAMHS support.”

The reference to parent support groups for parents/carers of children with SEND was welcomed, particularly in relation to helping parents to:

“navigate and understand the system and Local Offer, as well as emotional support, would be really beneficial for the whole system but especially for children and families”.

Of those “disagreeing” or “strongly disagreeing” with priority 2, 1 respondent felt there should be more support for children with Autism, while the other requested greater emphasis on working with the families of children affected by criminal and sexual exploitation due to the covid pandemic; this respondent expressed concern about children:

“potentially suffering with PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder] either now or in the future. There needs to be contextual multi-agency safeguarding meetings in order to

map these young people and best support them and their families to be free from exploitation.”

Priority 3 - Work together to provide effective Early Help in line with our strategic objectives and Early Help Partnership Action Plan that supports children, young people, and families to easily access support.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the Strategy priority 3?		
	Number of respondents	%
Strongly agree	13	65
Agree	5	25
Neither agree nor disagree	1	5
Disagree	-	-
Strongly disagree	1	5
Total	20	100

90% “strongly agreed” or “agreed” with priority 3, with 1 respondent highlighting the importance of high-quality training and professional development across the partnership, and the inclusion of the voluntary and community sector:

“The keys for me are building resilience through high quality, accessible CPD [continuous professional development] and engaging local third sector partnerships to add capacity. The CPD offer is vital in terms of making sure that issues are identified and resolved as early as possible. Bucks is blessed with third sector provision which could form a vital strand in terms of building community links that mean families are known and supported.”

The respondent “strongly disagreeing” cited a lack the support/understanding from Early Help Services for children and young people with Autism, including a lack of mandatory training for staff on Autism.

Priority 4 - Develop a common understanding of Early Help across the partnership and promote a cohesive Buckinghamshire offer

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the Strategy priority 4?		
	Number of respondents	%
Strongly agree	12	60
Agree	6	30
Neither agree nor disagree	1	5
Disagree	-	-
Strongly disagree	1	5

Total	20	100
--------------	-----------	------------

90% “strongly agreed” or “agreed” with priority 4. The respondent “strongly disagreeing” cited a lack the support/understanding from Early Help Services for children and young people with Autism.

Additional or alternative suggestions

The online survey asked respondents to identify any other actions they felt should be taken. A number of suggestions were forwarded including requests for:

- Co-production of services and ongoing service user input in the development of the offer to be included as a *“central tenet of the Strategy.”*
- A greater focus on Early help as a universal offer with a prevention focus: *“not just aimed at those who are struggling, “known to services” or those impacted by the pandemic.”*
- Making exploitation a higher priority within the strategy with a focus on education, *“i.e. educating children about the risks associated with exploitation to help children be more aware of risk.”*
- Developing more specific (SMART) descriptions of the priorities so they are helpful to professional partners and parents.
- The development of youth engagement mechanisms such as Youth Trustees to sit on the Early Help governing bodies.
- Greater involvement of the voluntary and community sector and broader communities within the development of the support offer in Buckinghamshire.
- Developing family centres as a one stop shop for all partnership services that families may require.
- A focus on pre-school provision and its role in supporting and identifying need prior to statutory schooling.
- More parenting groups to support children with additional needs who do not have a diagnosis.
- Including a “You Said We did” in relation to family feedback to highlight achievements throughout the duration of the last strategy.
- Greater emphasis on *“quality”* support for families as well as accessibility.
- Strengthened partnership working with Adult Services to ensure collaborative whole family support i.e., supporting adult victims of domestic abuse whilst simultaneously supporting the child.
- Support to be available more quickly for children to prevent families continuing to struggle, with the respondent referencing long waiting times for CAMHS and Community Paediatrics.

- A description in the strategy to show what children, young people and their families/carers can expect from the implementation of the Strategy: *“the use of “I statements” to describe the outcomes for families may help to make the Strategy more relatable for parents.”*
- *“After-help rather than early help”* to be factored into the strategy to recognise the amount of early help resource spent on families stepping down from, or open to statutory services that is key function of the relevant services. Organisation views

Representatives responding on behalf of organisations were asked 2 specific questions about how well the draft strategy reflects their organisation’s focus and how far it would enable collaborative working. 100% of organisations “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that the strategy reflects their own focus, however, 1 respondent felt the draft strategy would not enable collaborative working, commenting that it is:

“very social care focussed; if delivery of the Strategy is to be via a partnership approach a broader lens would be beneficial. Collaborative working requires people to see that the document relates to their own work”.

This respondent also requested more information on how the strategy will be implemented (actions and timelines) to enable collaboration, more specific information on the health needs referred to in the strategy and the specific health areas covered.

To what extent do you agree the draft Early Help Partnership Strategy 2022-25 reflects my organisation’s focus?		
	Number of respondents	%
Strongly agree	3	75
Agree	1	25
Neither agree nor disagree	-	-
Disagree	-	-
Strongly disagree	-	-
Total	4	100

To what extent do you agree the draft Early Help Partnership Strategy 2022-25 will enable collaborative working between organisations?		
	Number of respondents	%
Strongly agree	3	75
Agree	-	-
Neither agree nor disagree	-	-
Disagree	-	-
Strongly disagree	1	25
Total	4	100

Children and young people's feedback

Pupils in years 11, 12 and 13 at the Grange School in Aylesbury were invited to answer questions that focussed on young people's knowledge and experience of services and related to each of the proposed priorities. The same questions were asked of 16 young people working with the Family Support Service ranging between 11 to 25 years. Not all young people answered all of the questions, but the combined responses are below. Their responses will influence the development of the support offer, highlight current issues facing young people and help us to understand how best to raise awareness of services so young people know what is available to them.

Age Group		
	Number of respondents	%
Years 7 -11 (Secondary aged 11- 16)	7	59%
Years 12-13 (Post-16 aged 16 -18)	1	8%
Year 14 (Post-16 aged 19)	3	25%
Age 20-25	1	8%

What is your current Education situation?		
	Number of respondents	%
In school	7	59%
Alternative learning provision	1	8%
In employment	1	8%
Attending a traineeship	3	25%

Priority 1 is organisations working together more closely to own and measure progress, and sharing information and success more frequently

What organisations or services have been most helpful or supportive in your life? (tick all that apply)		
	Number of respondents	%
Social Services	6	8%
Family support services/Youth Services	16	22%
School	15	21%
NHS	18	25%
Youth Offending Service	2	3%
CAMHS	5	7%
Other, please specify below (youth clubs, fostering service, Bucks MHST)	10	14%

Young people were asked what has been good about the support received and could anything be improved.

There were various responses relating to the different services, the majority of which were positive. Areas for improvement included the level of support offered by some schools and CAMHS and increasing youth activities. There were positive comments about Social Care, the Family Support Service and the NHS.

“Helped me with my anger and I could talk to someone.”

“Triage and group sessions were good.”

“Being supported to behave better and also to go to youth clubs where I meet new people.”

Priority 2 is expanding our support to help children, young people and families particularly disadvantaged by the COVID-19 pandemic

What are the biggest issues affecting young people since the pandemic? (tick all that apply)		
	Number of respondents	%
Mental Health	10	20%
Education/employment concerns	6	11%
Isolation	7	14%
Stress/Anxiety	10	20%
Self-esteem/Confidence	11	21%
Other, please specify below:	7	14%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not going out as much • Bad behaviour • Social media • Parental stereotypes, i.e. that teens have to behave a certain way • Lack of places to hang out near where you live, i.e. youth clubs that feel friendly enough that you could go to them. 		

Priority 3 is fine-tuning our Early Help Offer so that support is where it needs to be and can be accessed more easily.

Are you aware of Family Centres in Bucks and where they are located?		
	Number of respondents	%
Yes	10	23%
No	33	77%

If you answered yes or partly to the last question, are family centres places you want to go and how they could be made more young person friendly?

- “More activities for young people to socialise”.
- “Yes if there was fun things to do and games to play with other teenagers. Sports club would also make the youth club friendly”.
- “Have games and fun stuff for young people.”

Are you aware of where you can access Youth drop-ins and Youth Centres?		
	Number of respondents	%
Yes	8	67%
No	1	8%
Partly (please give details below)	3	25%

The young people who answered ‘partly’ all said that they knew about it through their parents.

Where would you go and who would you speak to for help with things like school, friendships, relationships, mental health, going to college or getting a job?		
	Number of respondents	%
Family	47	52%
Friends	27	30%
Pets	2	2%
Teachers	5	5%
Youth club	2	2%
No one	3	4%
Professional I’m working with	5	5%

Priority 4 is developing a common understanding of Early Help across the partnership and promote a cohesive Buckinghamshire offer

What does the term ‘Early Help’ services mean to you?

Several young people demonstrated that they understood the term:

“Getting help and a head start”

“Getting help before you go into education or a job”.

“It means receiving help early if you need it”.

However, some young people said that they didn't understand what it meant.

The young people were asked if they had any other feedback on the draft strategy and one response was received:

“Broadcast it more, make more people more aware of it and what it is”.

Conclusion and next steps

The consultation feedback has been collated and a revised Early Help Partnership Strategy is now being developed to take account of this feedback.

The revised strategy will be shared with decision-makers in the Spring term with a view to publishing in April 2022.