

| | | | |
|--------------------------|--|--|--------------------------|
| Subject: | Early help review and development of a city-wide strategy to support children, young people, and families at risk of disadvantage | | |
| Date of Meeting: | 14 June 2021 | | |
| Report of: | Executive Director of Families, Children and Learning | | |
| Contact Officer: | Name: | Caroline Parker / Carolyn Bristow | Tel: 01273 293587 |
| | Email: | Caroline.parker@brighton-hove.gov.uk | |
| Ward(s) affected: | All | | |

FOR GENERAL RELEASE.**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT**

- 1.1 The Council is committed to improving outcomes for the most disadvantaged families and children. It is recognised that there are multiple factors creating and compounding issues of disadvantage for children, young people, and families across our city. These often result in poorer educational, health and skills outcomes. In addition, while there are areas of deprivation in wards across the city, some areas have significantly high indices of deprivation (measured in low super output areas) compared to others. The longer-term impact of Covid for families and communities is likely to be significant, particularly in relation to factors known to increase disadvantage, such as poverty, living conditions, unemployment, relationships, mental health, and wellbeing.
- 1.2 Nationally the Government has committed to extending the Troubled Families Programme and has renamed this as the Supporting Families Programme. The paper explains Supporting Families in more detail and the commitments the Council has signed up to.
- 1.3 Locally the Council plans to lead a multi-agency review of early help with the aim of improving the coordination of services to improve the outcomes of disadvantaged families. This will include transforming the way data is shared across different services and organisations.
- 1.4 This report also outlines plans to develop a strategy to support children, young people, and families at risk of disadvantage.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Committee notes the national requirements of the Supporting Families Programme.

- 2.2 That the Committee notes the proposal for a multi-agency programme to review and develop early help services to improve the outcomes of disadvantaged families. This will include reviewing children's centres and considering the option of children's centres delivering services for a wider range of children and families including developing a Family Hub model of support. Consultants will be used to support the review.
- 2.3 That the Committee notes plans to develop a strategy to support children, young people, and families at risk of disadvantage.
- 2.4 That the Committee agrees to create a new task and finish cross-party Member working group to support and inform the Early Help review and strategy development.

3. CONTEXT / BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 Working Together to Safeguard Children states "Providing early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later. Early help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life, from the foundation years through to the teenage years. Early help can also prevent further problems arising; for example, if it is provided as part of a support plan where a child has returned home to their family from care, or in families where there are emerging parental mental health issues or drug and alcohol misuse".
- 3.2 There is a 'Whole Family Working – A Strategy for Early Help,' which was agreed by the Local Safeguarding Children's Board in March 2018. The purpose of the strategy was to agree a collective commitment that whole family working, and early help is the responsibility of everyone who works with children and families. Whole family working means: an assessment that takes account of every family member, a single outcomes-focused plan and one lead worker for the family who coordinates the plan and the work of other professionals. There is a focus on reducing duplication of intervention, the 'referring on' culture and the number of professionals involved with a family, whilst recognising that sometimes specialist help and advice is necessary. The aim of the strategy was to transform services to improve outcomes for vulnerable families and reduce the demand for high cost services. This strategy now needs updating.
- 3.3 The Council leads a multi-agency early help partnership which brings together services both within and outside the Council. The aims of the Partnership are to:
 - Provide effective leadership to further develop multi-agency integrated commissioning and delivery of support for vulnerable families
 - Promote a multi-agency early help and whole family approach within and across partner services and organisations with a focus of addressing need early and preventing escalation into statutory services
 - Develop a digital transformation strategy to ensure that technology, data, and information are shared across the early help system to better coordinate interventions, assess vulnerability / risk and deliver value for money

- 3.4 A peer review by the Local Government Association (LGA) in January 2020 found that there are good services, provided by a range of agencies or in partnership, which are leading to better outcomes for children and families. But the whole system is not yet coherently aligned to make the best and most efficient use of these resources. A Summary of the LGA Review is at Appendix 1. An in-depth Early Help System review was completed in December 2020 using the national Troubled Families self-evaluation framework. This identified areas which are well developed, improving and less developed in Brighton and Hove. A summary is at Appendix 2.
- 3.5 The SEND Strategy includes an action to: “Review the early help offer in the city to reduce health and social care inequalities and to improve support for children and families with SEND.
- 3.6 Covid has led to changes in the way that services work and there is a high demand for support.

The Supporting Families Programme (previously known as Troubled Families)

- 3.7 The Supporting Families Programme (SFP) is led by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). It aims to transform the way family services are delivered in local areas, making them more coordinated, family-centred and data driven. The programme champions whole family and multi-agency working to support vulnerable families, that is those experiencing multiple disadvantages such as worklessness, domestic abuse, and poor mental health. In March MHCLG has announced details of the transition from Troubled Families to Supporting Families to focus on supporting vulnerable families to build resilience and thrive and on enabling system change locally and nationally.
- 3.8 Funding beyond 2021 / 22 has not been announced, but it has been made clear that the current year is to be spent preparing for a new Supporting Families programme to be launched in April 2022. Future funding may be linked directly to achieving transformation, as a means of incentivising change.
- 3.9 The mandatory grant conditions for 2021/22 are:
- to integrate and transform local public services to embed whole family working using the Early Help System Guide to inform the development, refinement and implementation of early help and data strategies
 - achieve outcomes for 398 families, plus submit progress data on any other families supported
 - establish a strategic partnership data governance forum to explore data sharing from population to person level, partnership investment in shared data transformation, development of joint analytics, identification of and overcoming barriers and sharing of good practice.
 - participate in a data sharing pilot project to share all early help data on families from the point of referral through to outcomes, plus share population measures used to track impact of support in reducing crime, homelessness and demand for children’s social care.
 - provide sufficient coordination to achieve the required commitments and ensure sufficient developmental and analytical resource to deliver data

transformation.

- 3.10 The Council is bidding for funding from the Government's Local Data Accelerator Fund. The £7.9 million fund aims to support exemplar data projects that improve outcomes for children and families. The outcome of the bid should be known in June or July. Bids have to include two or more local authorities and Brighton and Hove is partnering with Newcastle as they also use Eclipse.

Family Hubs

- 3.11 Across the country there are over 150 Family Hubs registered with the Family Hub Network. Family Hubs provide a central access point for integrated family services, whether this is a building named a Family Hub, a building with another title, or a virtual access point. They aim to ensure families with children and young people aged 0-19 receive early help to overcome a range of difficulties and build stronger relationships. Family Hubs have been developed from a range of different buildings including children's centres.
- 3.12 In March 2021 the Government published the "Best Start in Life: A Vision for the First 1001 days. These 1,001 critical days are a unique period for a baby that sets the foundations for lifelong emotional and physical wellbeing. The recommendations included a welcoming hub for families: family hubs as a place for families to access Start for Life services. In this model services are focussed on children under 5.

Early Help Review and Development Programme

- 3.13 An organisation called Peopletoo have been commissioned to support the Council with reviewing and developing proposals to improve early help. The Review will also contribute to developing a citywide strategy to improve the outcomes of disadvantaged children, young people, and families.
- 3.14 The review and development programme will include:
- Creating a visual map of the existing Early Help system across the city, including the role of external partners.
 - Working with parents, children and young people, staff, and partners to identify what needs to change, what success would look like, and how to make change happen focused on the priority of tackling disadvantage.
 - Developing an overarching Outcomes Framework for disadvantaged children and families, linking across to wider Council and citywide work on disadvantage as it develops.
 - Identifying whether there are inefficiencies and duplications in the existing Early Help system, including looking at family journeys and experiences.
 - Considering options for digital transformation including improved information sharing and data integration.

- Defining a future model for early help and developing a business case for any proposed changes including any possible efficiency savings or invest to save opportunities.
 - Consulting on any proposed changes and amending proposals to take account of feedback.
- 3.15 The review will look at the models of Family Hubs used in different local authorities and consider the advantages and disadvantages of changing the way children’s centres operate in the city. The review will also look at the very different way children’s centres have worked during Covid.
- 3.16 Co-production is fundamental to the way People work. They intend to engage with a wide a range of internal and external partners, children and young people and parents and carers to understand individual and service perspectives to inform and influence the work. Specific engagement will take place to understand the needs of Black and Minority Ethnic families in the current system.
- 3.17 Outline timescales for the early help review are as follows:

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| May - Aug 2021 | Scoping work as described above |
| July 2021 onwards | Establishment of Cross Party Member Working Group |
| Sept - Dec 2021 | Progress report to the November Children, Young People and Skills Committee Discussion at the Early Help Partnership Board Submission of Full Business Case to Corporate Modernisation Board Preparation for any consultation |
| Jan - Mar 2022 | Formal public and staff consultation process if needed |
| April 2022 onwards | Public consultation outcomes and start of implementation – timing to be determined based on the proposed changes |

Development of a city-wide strategy to support children, young people, and families at risk of disadvantage

- 3.18 There is a city commitment to working in partnership to better identify and support those children, young people, and families in need. Those who are most at risk of being disadvantaged, those who face increased barriers to reaching success. The drivers for developing this strategy now include
- The need to update the whole family working / early help strategy
 - The findings from the LGA review and the early help system guide self-evaluation
 - Our local involvement in the Supporting Families programme
 - The early help review and development programme as set out above

- The impact of Covid particularly on those who are at risk of being disadvantaged
 - Disparity between how different communities in the city achieve
 - Importance of community engagement on this matter
- 3.19 The local authority intends to support and facilitate the development of a city wide, multi-agency, coproduced strategy.
- 3.20 Coproduction is a central principle of strategy development. This means speaking directly with children, young people, and their families to learn from their lived experience and include them in designing our future.
- 3.21 The work to develop a strategy will be at the centre of the work of the Early Help review and this will include:
- Talking to stakeholders including families about what we all understand by being at risk of disadvantage
 - Consider the impact of Covid on residents included in the scope of this strategy
 - Exploring what outcomes we want to see for families – what do we want to see change
 - Looking at what data is available to understand the experience of families at risk of disadvantage and explore digital transformation opportunities to better support them
 - Mapping what work is already happening to support families in the city so this can be better promoted and accessed by those that need it most
 - Aligning the strategy to existing work e.g. on mental health / youth work / skills and employment agenda/ anti-racism/anti-poverty/community wealth building
- 3.22 Working to develop a focused strategy to tackle disadvantage is a way to ensure there is coherent and coordinated approach to combatting disadvantage.
- 3.23 Funding of £25,000 has been allocated to support the development of this strategy and work is underway to develop and appoint to a new engagement and project manager role, who will support the coproduction of the development of the strategy.
- 3.24 It is anticipated there will be a draft strategy available for full consultation in Spring 2022

Cross Party Member Working Group

- 3.20 The proposal is also to create a new time limited cross -party working group to oversee the early help review and the development of the disadvantaged strategy. The group will last for six months with the option of extended the work by a further six months if needed.
- 3.21 A copy of the draft terms of reference and membership is given in Appendix 3.

4 ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 An alternative option would be to just focus on Council services rather a citywide approach to improving outcomes for disadvantaged families, but this would be less effective and limit the impact and success.

5 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The review will consider how best formally to involve families, community representatives and staff in co-designing the shape of future services. The involvement of stakeholders in this work is crucial and will be a key part of the development of future services.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 A holistic review of existing preventative services and early help provision is the best way to ensure that future financial decisions are focused on reducing inefficiencies and duplication across the system, whilst addressing gaps and targeting resources to support those families most in need and at risk of multiple disadvantage. This includes FCL services, wider BHCC services working with families (e.g. housing), health services (including health visiting and school nursing, both child and adult mental health, and drug and alcohol services), the police, schools and voluntary sector services working with families.
- 6.2 The work planned for the Early Help review is the necessary preparatory work for developing a citywide wide strategy for tackling disadvantage in families

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 7.1 Funding for the Supporting Families Programme has been extended for 2021/22. This is £0.946m and contributes to the Council funding for the Integrated Team for Families, Front Door for Families and management and performance support. Council core funding for the Integrated Team for Families is £0.653m

The Children's Centre budget for 2021/22 is £1.456m.

Corporate Modernisation Funding of £80,000 has been agreed to pay for the early help review in 2021/22. The cost of the consultants is £47,000. Funding of £25,000 was agreed in the budget to develop the disadvantaged strategy.

Finance Officer Consulted: Steve Williams/ David Ellis Date: 29 April 2021

Legal Implications:

- 7.2 Local authorities, under section 10 of the Children Act 2004, have a responsibility to promote inter-agency co-operation to improve the welfare of all children. The

council has statutory duties to identify and provide services to children in need under the Children Act 1989. Early help is recognised as vital to prevent children becoming in need of protection.

- 7.2.1 Local Authorities must have sufficient children's centres to meet the needs of young children and parents living in the area, particularly those in greatest need of support. In summary the discharge of the sufficiency duty involves the Local Authority considering and assessing three things: the need for children's centres in their area; what provision would be enough to meet that need; and what number of children's centres it would be reasonably practicable for the Local Authority to provide, taking into account such matters as affordability, and practical considerations such as the availability of appropriate buildings, geographic location, and accessibility.
- 7.2.2 There is a need for a consultation before any decision is made: Section 5D of the 2006 Act provides that:
- (a) An English local authority must secure that such consultation as they think appropriate is carried out –
 - (b) before any significant change is made in the services provided through a relevant Children's Centre.
 - (c) before anything is done that would result in a relevant children's centre ceasing to be a children's centre...”.
- 7.2.3 The consultation should explain how the local authority will continue to meet the needs of families with children under 5 as part of any reorganisation of services. It should also be clear how respondents' views can be made known and adequate time should be allowed for those wishing to respond.

Lawyer Consulted: Natasha Watson Date: 11 May 2021

Equalities Implications:

- 7.3 The aim of the review will be to ensure that outcomes for disadvantaged families improve. This will include completing a detailed Equalities Impact Assessment as part of the review.

Sustainability Implications:

- 7.4 Sustainability implications will be considered including how far families have to travel to access services.
- 7.5 By supporting families most in need earlier reduced demand on more expensive targeted services, enabling service provision in the city to be more sustainable and available to others who are in need.

Brexit Implications:

- 7.6 Not yet known and will be considered as part of the review.

Any Other Significant Implications:

7.7 Will be considered as part of the review.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

7.8 One of the Supporting Families eligibility criteria is: Staying safe in the community: Parents or children involved in crime or antisocial behaviour

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

7.9 Will be considered as part of the review.

Public Health Implications:

7.10 The aim of the Supporting Families Programme, early help review and disadvantaged families strategy will be to improve health outcomes for families.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

7.11 Will be considered as part of the review.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Summary of the Local Government Peer Challenge
2. Summary of the Early Help System Review
3. Terms of Reference for the Task and Finish Cross Party Member Working Group on early help and disadvantage

Background Documents

1. [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)
2. [Supporting Families - 2021-22 and beyond - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)
3. [The best start for life: a vision for the 1,001 critical days - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

Appendix 1

Key Findings from the Local Government Association Peer Review

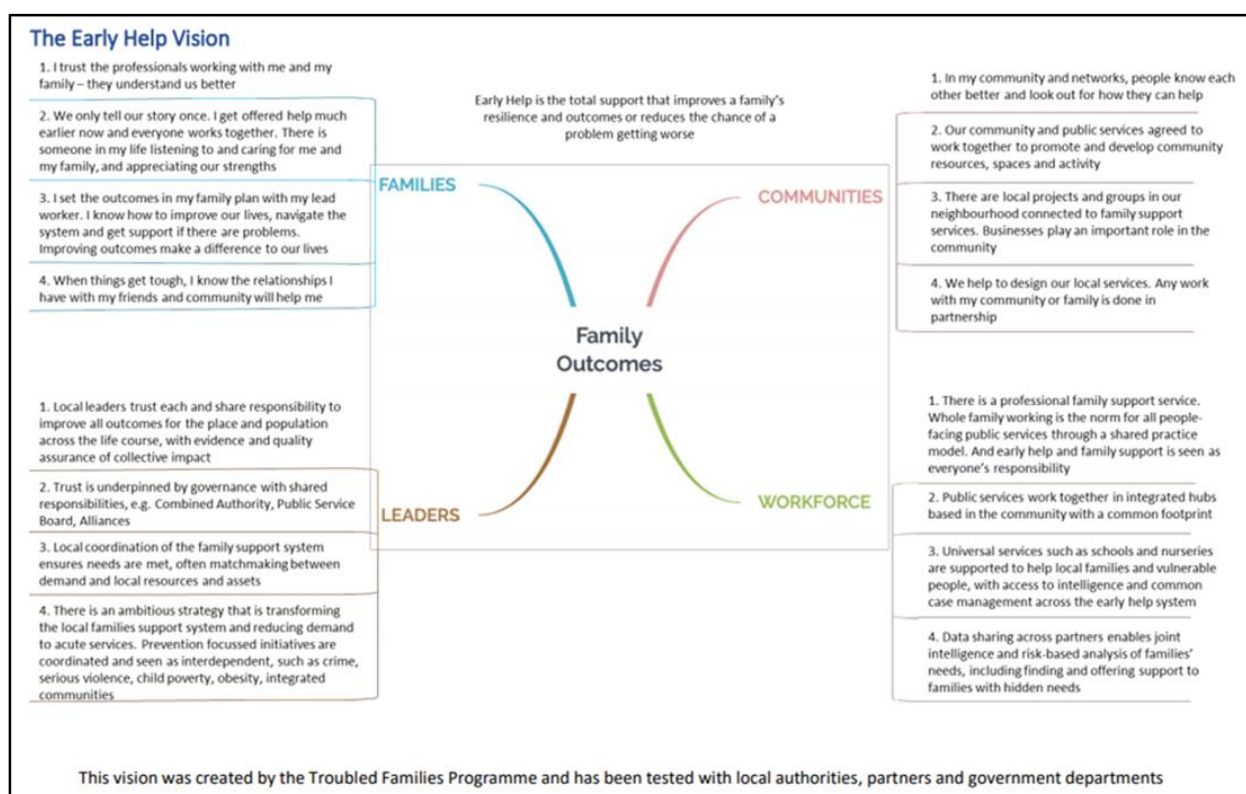
The Local Government Association was invited to complete a Preventative Services Peer Review in January 2020. This review noted that there are several good services, provided by a range of agencies or in partnership, which are leading to better outcomes for children and families. But the whole system is not yet coherently aligned to make the best and most efficient use of these resources. Since the review the name of the Whole Family Partnership Board (WFPB) has changed to the Early Help Partnership Board. The main recommendations were:

- To ensure the success of the whole family approach, all partners need to own and drive the vision, agree cohesive governance arrangements, and be actively engaged in the Whole Family Partnership Board (WFPB)
- Strategic leaders should ensure that the whole family approach is communicated effectively across all levels of the partnership and delivery teams and is well embedded
- The WFPB should consider the development of a fully integrated preventative model, based on multi-agency and multi-disciplinary teams, potentially located within the existing children's centre more integrated and multi-agency system can be developed including considering the creation of Family Hubs.
- Strategic leaders should give greater attention to evidencing impact and outcomes for families, to enable best use of existing resources and with a view to developing the business case for further investment in preventative services
- Partners should utilise the opportunity to maximise capacity by reducing duplication alongside simplifying the service offer and referral routes
- The WFPB should develop and implement a joint commissioning strategy across the Council, CCG, and other key partners in support of the whole family approach
- As part of that joint commissioning strategy, the WFPB should work with the CVS to identify additional preventative services they may be able to offer and map against existing provision

Appendix 2

Key findings from the self-assessment of the Early Help system

- 1.1 The Ministry for Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) MHCLG's [Early Help System Guide](#) is based upon a national vision for early help. This is defined as *'the total support that improves a family's resilience and outcomes or reduces the chance of a problem getting worse. The vision looks at the early help system from the point of view of families, communities, people in the diverse workforce and leaders.'*
- 1.2 As part of the grant funding conditions for Troubled Families, Local Authorities were required by the MHCLG to complete a self-assessment of their Early Help systems using this guide, looking at:
- the maturity of the Early Help system, including how embedded the whole family working model is
 - the maturity of data systems and processes to support the Early Help system
- 1.3 The following diagram is a visual representation of the national vision for early help. This summarises an 'ideal' model:



- 1.5 The self-assessment was completed using a combination of desk research including reviewing existing strategies, plans and the findings of the commissioned LGA review; together with a series of 1:1 and group discussions with representatives from within and outside of the Council.

1.6 Findings can be summarised as follows:

| |
|---|
| Well developed |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Relationship-based practice is integral across the system• There is a lot of information and support available to families, with services and organisations willing to go the extra mile to ensure families can navigate and access this• There is an established whole family support service (ITF), which is well regarded• Much focus is placed on strengthening family and parental relationships• Good working relationships exist between local leaders at all levels and across the wider Early Help system, including VCS and public bodies• There is a sense of collective responsibility for supporting families facing multiple disadvantage• There is a comprehensive workforce development offer, free at the point of access and shared with partners across the system• The 'team around the school' model is well regarded |
| Improving |
| <p>A 'think family' approach is increasingly employed by partners across the system</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Co-design and coproduction work are taking place with families as well as young people, to help shape both strategy and service offers• Feedback is being used to support changes in practice• Some work is underway to impact demand by building community capacity• Quality assurance of Early Help practice, with whole family work monitored through the FCL Performance Framework• Joint work around prevention initiatives• An increased focus on addressing wider issues outside of initial reason for referral e.g. the six TF themes |
| Less developed |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• No shared ownership of a family outcomes framework across the partnership• Lack of joint commissioning or system design to support a shared outcomes framework• Limited coordination across the Early Help system, with many elements working well but independently from each other e.g. multiple points of triage / access / allocation / intervention• Systemwide practice model is not well defined, although good practice does exist within individual services• Outside of safeguarding, limited data sharing between partners• Multiple case management systems with limited interoperability, making it difficult to see a whole family picture and bring together information without time-consuming, costly manual processes• Sometimes multiple service involvement without coordination of a single assessment, plan, or approach; leading to families having to tell their story several times and on occasion, practitioners being unaware of the role of other professionals• Limited case working of whole families outside of ITF, social work, and Early Help Coordinators• Limited data-driven analysis to inform strategic decision-making, service and practice development, insight modelling and needs analysis |

Appendix 3

Proposed Terms of Reference for Early Help Review and Disadvantaged Strategy development **Cross Party Member Working Group**

To be fully drafted June 2021

1. Name

Early Help Review and Disadvantaged Strategy development Cross Party Member Working Group

2. Purpose

The purpose of the Early Help Review and Disadvantaged Strategy development Cross Party Member Working Group will be:

- To maintain oversight of this area of work
- To consider actions required to progress both areas of work, ensure that the Council fulfils its duties to city residents and to advise the Children and Young People & Skills Committee (CYPS) accordingly
- To advise the CYPS committee regarding the progress of the area work
- To comment on the next steps

3. Status

The Early Help Review and Disadvantaged Strategy development Cross Party Member Working Group shall be an advisory board to the CYPS committee. The Board will not have subcommittee status and the political balance rules in section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 will not apply. However, it is expected that the Board will be established on a cross party basis.

4. Areas of focus

The Member Working Group (MWG) will focus on the review and development programme around early help for families and the development of a strategy to help those at risk of disadvantage.

5. Reporting

The MWG will report to CYPS Committee with recommendations as necessary.

6. Membership

The Chair of the MWG will be appointed from the largest political group unless Policy & Resources Committee has made other express provision.

Membership of the Board shall consist of 6 elected Members, following nominations by their Group Leaders to reflect the political composition of the Council. Nominees will be selected from the membership of the relevant parent committee(s).

7. Quorum

A minimum of two MWG members, inclusive of the Chair, are required for the MWG meetings to proceed.

8. Meetings and ways of working

The timing and number of meetings will be dictated by the volume of business for the MWG.

At the first meeting the Group will agree ways of working appropriate to the role and remit of the Group.

8. Review

This is an ad hoc group established for a limited time. The work of the group is expected to finish by (TBC) when it will report back to the CYPS Committee.

9. Management of the MWG

Administration for the MWG will be provided by Families, Children & Learning. The agenda and accompanying papers will normally be circulated one week in advance of meetings, but additional material may be sent later or tabled where necessary. Papers and minutes of each meeting will be issued within seven days of the meeting and will be confidential; Members will decide at the end of the meeting those items which may be discussed more widely.

The Working Group will be advised by the Head of Early Years and lead for Early Help Strategy and by the Service Manager for Policy & Business Support and other officers as may from time to time be required.

The Working Group may call upon specialist advice from legal, financial, property and other officers of the Council, and external consultants, as it sees fit.

