



Report to Policy Committee

Author/Lead Officer of Report:

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Report of: Joe Horobin, Director of Integrated Commissioning

Report to: Education, Children and Families Policy Committee

Date of Decision: 27th September 2023

Subject: Sheffield’s Early Years Strategy “Start for Life Sheffield” 2023 - 2028

Has an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) been undertaken?	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
If YES, what EIA reference number has it been given? 2306				
Has appropriate consultation taken place?	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has a Climate Impact Assessment (CIA) been undertaken?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If YES, give details as to whether the exemption applies to the full report / part of the report and/or appendices and complete below:				
Purpose of Report:				
To share the New Sheffield Early Years Strategy “Start for Life Sheffield”2023 – 2028 with the Education, Children and Families Committee for consideration and approval.				

Recommendations:
It is recommended that the Education Children and Families Policy Committee consider “Start for Life Sheffield 2023 – 2028” (attached at Appendix 1) and agree its adoption as Sheffield’s Early Years Strategy for the next 5 years.

Background Papers:

None

Appendices:

Appendix 1 - Final Strategy Document (and Appendices A to D to the Strategy)

Lead Officer to complete: -	
1	I have consulted the relevant departments in respect of any relevant implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist, and comments have been incorporated / additional forms completed / EIA completed, where required.
	Finance: Kayliegh Inman
	Legal: Nadine Wynter
	Equalities & Consultation. Ed Sexton EIA number 2306
	Climate: N/A - climate impacts have been considered by the Early Years and Early Help Commissioning Team
h	<i>Legal, financial/commercial and equalities implications must be included within the report and the name of the officer consulted must be included above.</i>
2	SLB member who approved submission: Meredith Dixon Teasdale
3	Committee Chair consulted: Dawn Dale Shared at member briefing at consultation stage and final version stage on 1 st August 23 and shared at ECF Committee Pre-Meet September 23.
4	I confirm that all necessary approval has been obtained in respect of the implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist and that the report has been approved for submission to the Committee by the SLB member indicated at 2. In addition, any additional forms have been completed and signed off as required at 1.
	Lead Officer Name: <i>Marie McGreavy</i>
	Job Title: <i>Strategic Commissioning Manager</i>
	Date: 04-09-2023

1. PROPOSAL / UPDATE

- 1.1 Sheffield families face difficulties as a result of the impact of the Covid 19 Pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis which may impact negatively on the health and wellbeing of our youngest citizens. It is important that we revisit our priorities and approaches to supporting children in their early years and families by developing a new 2023 – 2028 strategy that will continue to drive improved outcomes for Sheffield’s children.
- 1.2 This Strategy sets out a high-level overview of how we need to work together to achieve our ambitions. There are new developments around early years both in place now and planned for the coming years, for example, changes to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), the introduction of Family Hubs and the Start for Life Offer, a new Infant Mental Health Pathway for the city, and Maternal Cultural Safety developments all of which aim to improve the life chances of young children and their families. We need to factor the impact all of these developments within the ambitions in our new strategy.
- 1.3 There are many other strategies, plans and programmes of work which we will take account of and align to when implementing this strategy and many of the actions contained within those plans will impact positively on our ambitions. (Information provided in Appendix B to the Strategy.) As such we need to draw the extensive activity and ambition for Sheffield’s early years children and their families into one vision:

Children’s experiences during their early years are likely to shape the rest of their lives, whether it is their attainment at school and in turn their future job prospects, through to their long-term health outcomes.

Sheffield’s Strategy for Early years is to work together, through city wide sector engagement in all early year’s initiatives and strategies to support parents to provide children with the best possible start to their life. Our overarching ambition is to ensure our children have happy, healthy, childhoods leading to improved outcomes for Sheffield’s future adult population.

- 1.4 The strategy covers children and their families from pregnancy to 5 years. Getting a good start in life and throughout childhood, building resilience and getting maximum benefit from education are important markers for good health and wellbeing throughout life. (*Evidence into action: opportunities to protect and improve the nation’s health and NHS Five Year Forward View*). Good health, wellbeing and resilience are vital for all our children now and for the future of society.
- 1.5 The strategy has been led by Early Years and Early Help Commissioning Team and has engaged parents, carers, and partners from across the Early Years system including, childcare providers and health partners. The process of developing the strategy has built upon the existing recognised strengths of

the Early years partnerships in the city to identify priorities and those areas where we could collectively improve outcomes.

- 1.6 Following consultation, stakeholder involvement remains a priority in terms of development and oversight of the strategy via a governance structure which aligns Family Hubs and Start for life within the overarching governance structure for children and young people. The strategy will be managed via the Family Hubs Programme Board and will be monitored by the Early Help Partnership Board. A data dashboard will be provided quarterly, along with a quarterly update report which will be presented to the Early Help Partnership Board and provided to the Children and Young Peoples Delivery Group. Annual progress reports will be provided to relevant groups and networks including the Early Years Provider Network and the Inclusion Task force.
- 1.7 Data related to the above success criteria along with regular feedback and evaluation information will be used to demonstrate progress towards our ambitions. We will ensure that when looking at data across the areas included in the strategy, we will include collection and analysis of appropriate equality monitoring to measure progress and impact.
- 1.8 The key Ambitions of the Strategy are:
 - **Ambition 1.** Children and their families achieve their potential with support from an Early Years system that is connected to Communities, understands the needs of Sheffield Families, and responds to needs and themes by working together across organisations.
 - **Ambition 2.** We work in collaboration with Early Years childcare and education providers to meet the Government's 2023 promise of 30 hours of free childcare per week for eligible working parents with children aged nine months to three years by September 2025
 - **Ambition 3.** We mitigate the effects of inequality, poverty and disadvantage on babies and children's safety, health and development and we support families to be healthy and maintain good health.
 - **Ambition 4** Families of and Children with SEND or Complex Health Needs are well supported from the earliest point and receive seamless support throughout all transitions in early life.
 - **Ambition 5** Parents are supported and enabled to provide the best possible start in life for their children.

2. HOW DOES THIS DECISION CONTRIBUTE?

- 2.1 The need to continuously develop the maturity of our Early Years System supports the Corporate Delivery Plan, namely.
 - **Happy young people who have the start they need for the future they want** – by working together with Parents an Early Years system under the umbrella of a new Early Years Strategy, we can build on the strengths of partnerships, knowledge, and skills in the city to provide the best possible start for Early Years Children and their families.

- **Fair, inclusive, and empowered communities** – the partnership networks we are expanding as part of the Family Hub Transformation and the governance routes within Family Hubs will support in ensuring Sheffield Families and Early Years practitioners are able to contribute to and shape the issues that matter to them in their communities.
- **Strong and connected neighbourhoods** – we are improving the connectivity between voluntary and community sector activity, family networks and Early Years activity through building capacity in communities and harnessing the talent of parents, carers, and young people with lived experience to help one another.
- **Healthy lives and wellbeing for all** – we strive to ensure that families say they know how to navigate local services and that the help they have received addressed their problems and they are better connected to their own support network and local community.

3. HAS THERE BEEN ANY CONSULTATION?

- 3.1 Consultation launched at the Early Years Event held in October 2022, where 96 city-wide early year’s practitioners, partners, and professionals gathered to have their say, share successes, and begin to shape the strategy through collaborative co-production.
- 3.2 At the Early Year’s consultation event, it was agreed that there should be a name change for the new 2023 Early Years Strategy, the name agreed was “Start for Life Sheffield”, The *Start for Life* Sheffield Early Years Strategy is reflective of our city and our families, informed though cross sector consultation with parents / carers, state, private, voluntary and the community sector.
- 3.3 Following the Early Years Event, the on-line consultation survey was launched for both parent/ carers, professionals, and community partners. The survey questions focussed on what is working well and where improvements could be made.
- 3.4 133 parents /carers responses were received, and in addition 30 responses from early years professionals.
- 3.5 In addition, seven consultation focus groups were held gathering the voice of 30 further respondents engaged from a cross sector audience including early years providers, FIS (Family Intervention Service), Social Care, Access and Inclusion, Parenting, Infant Feeding and Doula team staff, Empowering parents/empowering communities (EPEC) volunteers, Infant feeding volunteers, Parent/carers forum focus group including employed staff with lived experience, the voluntary and community sector.
- 3.6 Consultation on the draft completed Strategy took place in July and August 2023 and feedback from this final consultation has resulted in additional content which has been incorporated into the final version.

4. RISK ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

4.1 Equality Implications:

4.1.1 The Council as a public sector organisation is subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED - Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010). It also applies to services and functions that we contract with who are carrying functions on our behalf. Decisions need to consider the requirements of the PSED. The General Duty notes that we must pay due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations between people who share a characteristic and those who do not

4.1.2 The Equality Act 2010 identifies the following groups as protected characteristics: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership (discrimination only); pregnancy and maternity (employment only); race; religion or belief; sex and sexual orientation. There are also other equality implications outside of the Equality Act that the Council has committed to responding within our Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) process such as socio-economic disadvantage and carers.

4.1.3 Understanding intersectionality is also vital component part of practicing inclusion, promoting equality, and reducing discrimination. Intersectionality identifies how different facets of one's identity contribute to a unique perspective as well as the ways in which different layers of one's identity overlap with one another. Everyone has some of the protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act, but it is also worth noting that although people share characteristics, people's experiences are not the same and there can be conflicting views between and within protected characteristics. The Race Equality Commission Report noted the varied experiences of different ethnicities specifically and the need to not use the put all groups together under the one label as this often masks the barriers and experiences of specific groups.

4.1.4 The intention is to use the Early Years strategy to ensure progress on all areas of inequality within early years including the outcomes referred to in SCCs response to the Race Equality Commission. In addition, all other plans/proposals will be subject to their own EIAs and as such specific actions will be included them.

4.2 Financial and Commercial Implications:

There are no direct financial implications arising from this strategy development. The strategy describes working together to effectively ensure progress in all aspects of Early Years development and as such any financial implications would be related to the individual strategies and services that contribute to Early Years developments rather than from the strategy itself.

4.3 Legal Implications

This Strategy will help the Council to fulfil its duties under the Childcare Act 2006, which requires local authorities to improve the well-being of young children, reduce inequalities, and work with their relevant partners. The strategy will also support the Council to meet its duties under Section 10 of the Children Act 2004, which requires each local authority to make arrangements to promote cooperation between the authority, each of the authority's relevant partners and such other persons or bodies working with children in the local authority's area as the authority considers appropriate.

4.4 Climate Implications

Where services will be delivered by external partners and providers, we will aim to work with providers who align with our ambition to be a Net Zero city by 2030, through the procurement process. We will encourage partners to think about the climate impacts of delivering the service, such as use of office space, staff and client travel, energy and resource use, and opportunities to increase awareness of positive climate action, and take appropriate steps to reduce their impacts in the delivery of the service.

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 The current Early Years Strategy that ended in March 2023 could have been refreshed. However, the level of change locally both locally and nationally in terms of the issues facing families, the impact of the pandemic and the national developments around EYFS and Family Hubs presented an opportunity to consult and co-produce a new Early Years Strategy that can positively impact on the lives of children and young people.

6. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 Sheffield is a great place to grow up and the new Early Years Strategy “Start for Life Sheffield” sets out how we will work together across the Early Years workforce to give all Sheffield children the start for life that they deserve. Setting out our ambitions from pre- birth to school life will support all children to have equality of opportunity to be healthy, happy, and safe. As such it is important for the Education Children and Families Committee members to have contributed to the development of the Strategy and provide final approval for its use as the city’s Early Years Strategy.

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