

Mr Paul Marshall
Cabinet Member for Children and Young
People

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Michael Cloake
Chairman
Children and Young People's Services Select Committee

Dear Michael,

Alterations to the Integrated Prevention and Earliest Help (IPEH) Service

I am writing in response to the recommendations from the Children and Young People's Services Select Committee on 31 October 2018, and have addressed these in detail below. I am grateful for your Committee's scrutiny of this proposal, and in particular members' strong and continuing support for the principle of Early Help.

The recommendations to me from your Committee and my responses are as follows:

- 1. that the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People write to the relevant Government Minister to strongly request the continuation of the Troubled Families Initiative (TFI).**

The County Council has raised these points with the Ministry for Housing, Communities & Local Government on several occasions, including through a County Council resolution, and later through personal dialogue between our Leader and the Minister. We have provided evidence and case studies to illustrate the positive benefits of integrated prevention and earliest help in West Sussex. I agree that there is value in formally communicating to government that resource reductions are becoming necessary in West Sussex, due to the tailing-off of grant, and many other authorities will be in the same position.

- 2. that the Cabinet Member consider the wider impact these changes may have on other IPEH services.**

Working with officers, I have satisfied myself that there is no wider impact of the proposed changes than those described to the Select Committee at your meeting. As was explained then, we do not anticipate any adverse experiences, either for customers already participating in the stated activities, or prospective users.

- 3. that the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People contact local MPs, District, Borough, Town and Parish councils to strengthen collaborative working with IPEH, particularly earliest help, to keep this offer strong.**

The power of the wider IPEH Partnership in collective responsibility for outcomes with families and their wider communities is readily acknowledged. In common with officers, I have many opportunities to meet with and influence partners and key stakeholders, and will be ensuring that this message of strengthening collaborative working is heard. The issue will be tabled at a forthcoming meeting of West Sussex MPs. A special meeting of the IPEH Partnership Board has been called on 14 December to look at the context and implications of this decision before it is formally taken. We place a very high reliance on partner contributions, and it is important that the County Council does not shoulder a disproportionate amount of the burden of what should be a common responsibility across the public sector.

- 4. that the Cabinet Member considers whether contingency arrangements can be put in place for all three affected areas to allow effective continuation of service beyond IPEH, and that no children are disadvantaged or discouraged.**

Detailed work on the feasibility of these proposals is continuing in advance of a firm decision. On the basis of what we know currently, I am confident that a smooth transition to the new arrangements can be achieved, and that, as stated at the meeting, no current or prospective candidates or service users will be disadvantaged by the changes.

- 5. that the IPEH service returns to the Committee at the earliest possible opportunity to consider any further reductions that may be required resulting from future declines in funding.**

I am keen to involve your Committee in future debates about the IPEH service, not least because of your members' evident commitment to Early Help principles, and their grounding in the subject from the original discussions about the formation of this excellent service, during 2016/17. I have to sound a note of caution however, in that – in common with all our services – future financial pressure is virtually inevitable. Nonetheless we will continue to press central government for a favourable outcome, and I assure you of my personal commitment to continuing to operate a preventative service to support our most vulnerable families in West Sussex.

Thank you for your Committee's careful scrutiny of these proposals.

Yours sincerely,



Paul Marshall
Cabinet Member for Children and Young People
West Sussex County Council