

Pledges of support from Leicester's Voluntary and Community Sector

We, as representatives of the Voluntary and Community Sector in Leicester, fully support the Vision and Principles as set out in Leicester's 0-5 Strategy 2016 – 2019.

We recognise the issues that are prioritised in the strategy as they resonate with the work we do with families on a daily basis across the city. Leicester's young children often require support with improving their health and wellbeing; developing their skills and being ready to go to school; and, ensuring they live in safe and secure home environments with parents and carers who able to support them to thrive.

We also recognise that we have an important role to play in caring for and educating children and are very well placed, at the heart of local communities, to support parents and families to function independently and in an environment where their children can achieve their potential.

The strategy sets out the following principles, which we wholly support. For each principle we have produced a statement that provides further information on how the VCS in Leicester specifically supports the intended outcomes of the 0-5 strategy and we welcome the opportunity to work more closely with statutory services to enhance and extend their provision where we can.

We will:

- 1) Provide a range of services that meet the needs of all children (universal), those that need 'Early Help' or some specific support (targeted) and those that have more complex support needs (specialist)

We are able to provide a broader range of services than might be provided by statutory services as we have fewer restrictions and are able to more easily set out own priorities and strategic direction.

Our funding comes from a range of different charitable sources that may be very flexible in terms of their intended outcomes. This means we are able to innovate and try new approaches which may not be possible with public funding.

We can often act quickly to provide services to meeting emerging needs and may fill gaps in providing support to families that may be a helpful addition to support they may be receiving from the public sector.

- 2) Provide flexible, inclusive and responsive services that are coordinated and delivered by a range of providers to ensure children and families receive and can easily access the support they need

As above, our varied funding sources may enable us to be more flexible about how, when and where we deliver services to families. As a sector, we are very diverse and can offer very specialist areas of support as well as general support to families.

We are often based at the heart of communities and have direct access to and 'insider' knowledge about the neediest families and communities with which we have built trust. We are well-placed to build strong community networks and be proactive and approachable, responding to needs when we see problems arising.

- 3) Ensure that our services focus on improving outcomes for the child by using approaches that are based on sound evidence and can demonstrate measurable impact through robust performance management processes

We are committed to improving outcomes for children and families. We are often able to build upon our successes by extending or developing new projects based upon the evidence we have been able to submit to funders demonstrating our positive impact.

- 4) Actively seek to understand the situation of the whole family when we offer services to meet the needs of a child, supporting them to become resilient and independent

Our place within communities enables us to give very regular (often daily) time and space to families, often without appointments, which may be more difficult for statutory services. This relationship enables us to fully understand the whole context within which the child lives on a daily basis, thereby providing support and signposting to other services to provide a holistic response.

- 5) Seek to involve children and their families in decision making, both about the services they access and the way we design and deliver services

We recognise that as a sector we are very well placed to undertake and lead on community consultation on a range of issues. We are committed to consulting and seeking the voice of the community and will therefore be able to provide direct information to statutory services on emerging needs and changing priorities.

- 6) Work with our partners to appropriately share information about children and families that will improve the services we provide and mitigate the risks that result when information is not shared

We recognise that for many families we are the first step they take towards engaging with support services they might need. We understand that sharing information appropriately with partner organisations is at the heart of a coordinated support response and we are committed to this principle.

- 7) Ensure that the children's workforce has the skills and knowledge to keep children safe and deliver services that improve their long term outcomes

We are proud to have a very committed and passionate workforce of staff and volunteers who want to make a difference to children and families. We recognise the skills and dedication of our workforce and are committed to utilising their skills wherever possible to keep children safe and improve their long term outcomes.

- 8) Provide high quality services that represent value for money by balancing the principles of efficiency, economy and effectiveness

We are able to offer high quality support to families that represents value for money, often because of our relatively low overheads and staffing costs. We welcome the opportunity to contribute to the programme of support available to children and families in Leicester and would be keen to collaborate with others and participate in tender/commissioning opportunities when we can.