

# Early Help Strategy

2014 - 2018



Director of Family Services  
(Senior Responsible Officer)

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**Version control & revisions**

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## Our strategy for Early Help Services

### 1. What is Early Help?

Early Help is all about identifying needs within families early, and providing preventative support before problems become complex and more intractable.

Early Help does not only mean offering support to very young children. Support may be offered early in life, or early after the emergence of a particular need. Although research shows that the most impact can be made during a child's early years, problems may emerge at any point throughout childhood and adolescence. In Early Help we will therefore offer services for children and young people aged 0 - 18.

Evidence suggests that an early response is a more effective and more efficient way of delivering services. It is better to provide an intense, focussed intervention when problems first emerge, rather than delivering a more costly statutory intervention when the needs have escalated. This includes using targeted services to reduce or prevent specific problems from getting worse and becoming deep seated or entrenched. We aim to reduce the demands upon specialist and higher tier services.

### 2. Our vision

Our vision is to promote the wellbeing and resilience of families with children from conception to 18, in a timely way by offering high quality and effective services.

### 3. Our aim

Our ambition is to offer help as early as possible to families who need support. The aim is to identify families with additional needs as early as possible through close partnership with a range of services.

Our goal is to work together and build relationships with families in order support children and young people to achieve good outcomes.

### 4. The national and local context

Enabling children, young people and families to reach their full potential has been a common theme in a number of reviews that have been commissioned by successive governments.

They have all independently reached the same conclusion that it is important to provide help early in order to improve outcomes for children and young people from preventing abuse and neglect to helping parents achieve the aspirations they hold for their children.

Interest nationally is also growing in an evidence base for early intervention, and in particular a need to demonstrate effectiveness in order to produce cost savings in more specialist and acute services. It is becoming clear that early intervention is not a one-off fix, but needs to be a sophisticated, highly targeted process and approach - a way of working with specific outcomes. Establishing what works best at local level and providing effective return on investment is critical and long-term.

A renewed focus and alignment of services is necessary because of the changing context within which all partners are working. A number of drivers have emerged that drive the requirement for an Early Help Strategy that will take us through the next four years:

- Commissioning opportunities and priorities
- Defining new ways of working through our Focus on Practice Programme
- The recommendations of the Munro, Family Justice and Allen Reviews
- Ofsted recommendations
- Government focus on “Troubled Families”
- Review of Early Help for Under 5s
- Financial pressures and reduced resourcing levels across all partner organisations

Our track record on Early Help has been recognised nationally and we are one of the first Early Intervention Places working closely with the Early Intervention Foundation.

## 5. Features of effective Early Help

- ✓ A multi-agency and integrated response that brings a range of expertise through a “Team Around the Family” approach.
- ✓ A relationship with a trusted “Lead professional” who can engage the child and their family, and co-ordinate the support needed from other agencies or the community and voluntary sector.
- ✓ An approach that empowers families and helps them to resolve their own challenges, and builds resilience for the future – including support for young people and parents to gain employment.
- ✓ An approach that sees the child or young person’s needs in the wider family context
- ✓ It is easy to access for all sections of the community

## 6. Our focus on outcomes, and responding to the priorities of the families

We are committed to helping families improve the outcomes for children, and to support them to reach their potential. We want to narrow the gap by improving the outcomes of children who are disadvantaged.

Early Help will focus on improving the following outcomes:

- (i) *For children to have strong and effective parents*
- (ii) *Healthy young children who are ready to thrive at school*
- (iii) *Improved participation in education and training*
- (iv) *Prevention of harm and keeping children safe*
- (v) *Improved outcomes for children on the edge of care*
- (vi) *Prevention of crime and serious youth violence*

We will evaluate the impact of our Early Help services using a set of measures linked to each outcome.

Our performance against these outcome measures will shape how we deploy resources in the future.

## 7. Our principles & strategic approach

In providing early help support to children, young people and families, we will:

- ✓ **Build the capacity and of vulnerable families** to support their children to achieve positive outcomes. Helping parents to be strong and effective is the most effective way to help children, and a focus on parenting runs through all of our work.
- ✓ **Early identification of need** by working closely with universal settings, in order to prevent problems before they develop or to intervene at the earliest possible stage.
- ✓ **Develop personalised and family focused intervention plans** based upon an assessment of need. Where possible we will develop consistent, trusting relationships with families to support sustainable change.
- ✓ Design and commission our services and the interventions we deploy based on **the evidence of what works**. As an Early Intervention Place we will receive support in this from the Early Intervention Foundation.
- ✓ **Children, young people, their families and communities will drive the design** and evaluation of our services and be involved in decision-making regarding the delivery of those services. We will do this by engaging with young people and community champions within the community.
- ✓ **Ensure clarity** for service users and providers of universal services on how to access services when they need them. Services will be easily accessible and located where they are most needed. Information on services will be accurate and up to date and accessible to all who need it.
- ✓ We will ensure that children and young people are **supported through the key transitions** that occur during their lives that may cause disruption to their well-being, including transitions between schools, between services, between professionals and between localities.
- ✓ **Deploy both generic and specialist roles**, recognising that we need to implement a Whole Family Approach with one lead professional for the family, whilst ensuring we maintain the knowledge and skills of relevant specialist roles.
- ✓ Ensure that providers work together to offer coherent and **integrated early help services**.
- ✓ **Develop our workforce** with the appropriate skills to work together across institutional and professional boundaries focussed on the needs of children and young people.
- ✓ **Effective commissioning** will ensure that we eliminate duplication, aligning spending in order to get best value for money and evaluating outcomes to ensure services are effective.

- ✓ **The Children's Trust Board and Early Help Board** will bring together services for children under a common governance structure with shared vision, outcomes and objectives, joint commissioning and clear decision-making.
- ✓ Ensure that we can demonstrate through evidence and feedback that the **services make a difference** to the lives of children, young people and their families.
- ✓ We are committed to working closely across Hammersmith & Fulham, Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster, whilst maintaining **individual borough implementation plans**, which reflect the differences in the delivery structures, local sovereign priorities and levels of resourcing.

## 8. Objectives of our strategy

Our key objectives will be to:

- Focus rigorously upon our six priority outcomes.
- Improve early identification of the children with the highest predictive probability of poor outcomes, and improve long-term tracking of the impact of our interventions with these key cohorts.
- Revise our service model of investment in universal services together with key partners in line with our priority outcomes, in particular in respect of Play, Children's Centres and Youth Services.
- Improve the effectiveness of our targeted Early Help teams through our Focus On Practice programme which will deliver: fewer but more effective practitioners; a shared set of 4 evidence based interventions; smaller caseloads in order to work with families more intensively; integrating with key partners to maximise impact and positive outcomes, create posts that are more focussed on system support enabling more face-to-face time with families, and enable practitioners to work on a mobile basis.
- Develop a Children's Health and Social Care Integration Programme.
- Identify opportunities to deliver more effectively and efficiently where there is a business case to work together across Hammersmith & Fulham, Kensington and Chelsea, and Westminster.

## 9. Our Early Help Strategy

The key drivers for change within Early Help are to improve outcomes for children and young people through the identification and implementation of best practice, and planning to make the significant savings that Early Help services have to make in the next three/four years.

Our strategy to deliver improved outcomes with reducing resources will be to:

- Reduce demand on high need/high cost services – above all by reducing numbers of Looked After Children.

- Target our spending upon priority outcomes, reduce our spending upon universal services and upon our current targeted services.
- Work with colleagues and partners to deliver integrated services for shared outcomes: in particular health, education, employment and adult services.

We will need to continue the existing trend of moving our directly funded Early Help provision to being a service that is targeted upon children and families with significant needs and which is targeted upon our priority outcomes. In pushing through this approach we are engaging our key partners in explicit discussions about a Partnership Early Help Strategy which includes a commitment from universal services (most notably schools, health and voluntary organisations) to meet lower levels of need.

Our trends are positive and it is essential that we continue to reduce the demand upon high need/high cost services. We have invested more heavily in our front door and MASH in order to ensure that families referred to us receive the right response and that we redirect families to other services when appropriate. Over the past 4 years we have already delivered reductions in Children in Care, Child Protection and Children in Need.

We will need to make more use of Business Intelligence and work with partners to improve the systematic and earlier identification of those children at highest risk of poor outcomes. We will have a particular focus upon identifying cohorts in the Early Years where midwives, health visitors and early years providers have a key role, and in those approaching adolescence where primary, secondary schools and youth projects have a key role. We need to develop and implement an ambitious predictive framework and aim to be more confident in identifying children who are at risk of coming in to care. This will help reduce a tendency to be reactive with brief interventions that have limited long term impact. Instead, a predictive model will identify a manageable cohort that we track over intervening years to ensure less costly provision of support when it is needed. Our initial key priorities for this new approach to proactive and long-term cohort tracking are the Early Years and those on the Edge of Care.

With the integration programme as well as establishing earlier identification mechanisms, there will be a greater need for partners to share information, and therefore systems. This will result in revised Information Sharing Protocols, a potential for shared IT systems, and a review and change to existing pathway processes, all of which will continue to be compliant with the Data Protection Act. It may also result in using the same common assessment and progress measure tools, such as the Family Outcomes Star.

We have identified 5 specialist services which can be delivered more effectively and efficiently: Parenting Programme Co-ordination; Early Years Advisory Service; Private Fostering; Missing Children; and Children & Young People's Participation Work. Within each of these areas, we will review internal business processes to work more effectively, as well as maximise staff performance by enabling them to work on a mobile basis through use of up to date technology. Changing the way we work will have ICT implications and we will work with ICT colleagues to enable effective working of these teams and services.

We are working with Public Health and the CCG Children's leads to define the scope of an Integrated Children's Health & Social Care Programme which could realise our ambitions to deliver:

- Improved attachment and stimulation in Early Years;
- Improved outcomes in relation to obesity, dental health and immunisations;
- Midwives and Health Visitors doing more rigorous and systematic assessments, and ensuring vulnerable families receive targeted interventions;
- Health Visitors and Nurseries doing joint 2 year old developmental assessments;
- Remodeling CAMHS provision to be embedded in our teams with the capacity to meet adolescents' emerging mental health needs earlier and more effectively.

We aim to build upon the work done in the Family Recovery/Troubled Families Programme to develop an embedded approach to supporting parents to return to work, extending this to all our vulnerable families.

We need to raise the aspirations of all families we work with, and be more effective with DWP/JCP services in supporting young people and parents into employment, building upon the learning in this area from the on the Family Recovery Programme. The intention is that this function will be embedded into operational services within a two year period.

Our commissioning strategy will be to support our targeted Early Help offer, through re-shaping specifications, and identifying opportunities to re-commission on a shared basis.

We recognise that this will have a significant impact on how we work with children, young people and families. In addition to learning from the Queen's Park Neighbourhood Community Budget Pilot to engage with parents and residents in order to co-design services, we will be working with partner agencies such as Schools to set up and run local delivery fora in order to co-design services. We will also create a core offer document against each of the six outcome areas that will be made available to partners, children, young people, families, and residents. This core offer will set out who we work with, what services they can expect from us, how we will provide these services and why we provide them.

We will review our core business processes to ensure that they are focused upon outcomes for children and young people. This will include a review of existing documents to ensure that we capture 'the voice of the child or young person' and clearly demonstrate actions and practice that lead to specific outcomes, thereby setting out the impact of practice on the lives of children and young people.

We will align the core business process within Early Help Services so that staff are working in a more consistent way. We will also map out business processes against each of the 6 key outcome areas, in order to formalise pathways and customer journeys.

## 10. Measuring success

We believe that our success should be directly measured against the outcomes experienced by children, young and families. By 2016 we will expect to see that more families are empowered and supported to take control of their lives, and they are supported in their local communities avoiding the need for statutory intervention.

We will measure the outcomes detailed in the profile as proxy indicators of success, and will agree key performance indicators against each measure.



We will also set targets for improvement for 2014-15, 2015-16 and 2016-17.

These measures are reported quarterly on the Early Help Scorecard.

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Signed off	
Printed Name	Director of Family Services Senior Responsible Officer
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