

Early Help Strategy 2016-19 (0 – 19/25)

Summary

The Draft Early Help Strategy 2016-19 (the 'Strategy'), sets out the role and purpose of Early Help in Enfield, providing 16 recommendations to address the urgent need for a renewed focus and alignment of services because of the changing context within which all partners are working.

This would ensure our Early Help offer remains sustainable, effective and continues to meet the needs of service users.

As well as key challenges and areas of improvement identified with the support of partners, drivers for creating the Strategy include:

- Financial pressures and reduced resourcing levels across all partner organisations
- The transformation agenda across public services
- The recommendations of the Munro, Family Justice and Allen Reviews
- Ofsted recommendations
- Government focus on "Troubled Families"
- Review of Early Help for Under 5s

There is further work to be completed in order to produce an action plan and ensure continued strategic alignment of the Strategy. We are currently conducting analysis of our mapping and anticipate having an action plan and final Strategy by October 2016.

The Strategy will be owned by the Enfield Safeguarding Children Board (ESCB) and has been reviewed by the Children's and Education DMT. It is recommended given the role and remit of the Health and Wellbeing Board, that the Board also have some oversight of the Strategy.

1. Background

1.1. Early Help in Enfield is defined as:

"Intervening early and as soon as possible to tackle problems emerging for children, young people and their families or with a population most at risk of developing problems. Early intervention may occur at any point in a child or young person's life".

1.2. Working Together to Safeguard Children (2015) sets out a clear expectation that local agencies will work together and will collaborate to identify children with additional needs and provide support as soon as a problem emerges.

1.3. Providing early help is far more effective in promoting the welfare of children – and keeping them safe – than reacting later when any problems, may have become more entrenched.

1.4. In May 2016, following a mapping exercise and a series of thematic workshops with partners, **a Strategy was drafted to address the urgent need for a renewed focus and alignment of services because of the changing context within which all partners are working.**

1.5. **The key drivers** for such change are:

1.5.1. Financial pressures and reduced resourcing levels across all partner organisations

1.5.2. The transformation agenda across public services

1.5.3. The recommendations of the Munro, Family Justice and Allen Reviews

1.5.4. Ofsted recommendations

1.5.5. Government focus on “Troubled Families”

1.5.6. Review of Early Help for Under 5s

1.6. The Strategy comprises of 16 recommendations and recognises that with the pressing financial challenges that currently prevail, there is the need for a more keenly focused business case for early intervention, pre-empting and preventing the ever more costly levels of care and support of children and families that have reached crisis point.

1.7. The Strategy also aligns with the priorities and commitment to early intervention as set out in the *Enfield Children’s Plan 2016-19*.

2. **Aims**

- Preserve family life wherever feasible
- Reduce family dependence on intensive/specialist services
- Get it “Right First Time”
- Deliver value for money services
- Encourage participation and engagement
- Reduce social exclusion
- Protect children from significant harm
- Narrow achievement gaps
- Prevent crime and anti-social behaviour
- Reduce exclusion and improve attendance at school
- Promote readiness for school
- Improve life opportunities for young people and their pathways into education, employment and training

3. **Strategy Recommendations**

3.1. Further analysis of mapping to identify priority needs

3.2. Continued communications through consultation, participation and co-design to ensure raised awareness

3.3. Urgent and prioritised work within the Council’s IT work plan

- 3.4. Protocols to access specialist advice and guidance should be regularly reviewed and updated.
- 3.5. SoS training delivered to all partners and principles adopted
- 3.6. Regular information and training for partners on pathways and thresholds
- 3.7. Partners agree common mechanisms for recording information, actions and outcomes
- 3.8. Further explore evaluation tools in harmony with data collection requirements. ESCB should regularly monitor/review
- 3.9. Evidence based work to improve outcomes and analyse need to inform commissioning
- 3.10. Improve information sharing and review current protocols as part of ESCB work programme
- 3.11. Need a more formalised data and performance forum for Early Help services
- 3.12. Regular communications to all partners to achieve clarity and consistency
- 3.13. Parents/carers must give their explicit consent for information to be shared with other agencies in order to support need and offer additional Early Help services. The only exception is where there are explicit child protection concerns.
- 3.14. All referrals for Early Help services to be assessed against vulnerability scale at appropriate intervals until closure
- 3.15. Work towards a single standardised Early Help form
- 3.16. Continue developing Local Offer page to incorporate full Early Help offer

4. Progress to date

- 4.1. The Strategy has been approved by the Children's and Education DMT and has also been reviewed by the ESCB. We continue to collate any feedback.
- 4.2. In a 2015 report, Ofsted recommended that we ensure that the ESCB robustly monitors, evaluates and influences the effectiveness of early help services. As such, it has been agreed that the ESCB will have ownership of the Strategy.
- 4.3. We are currently conducting a needs assessment and further analysis of our mapping in order to produce an action plan later this year. We anticipate having the final Strategy and a plan by October 2016.
- 4.4. Given the role and remit of the Health and Wellbeing Board, it has also been recommended that the Board have some oversight of the Strategy, providing input and feedback as part of reviews and monitoring once the Strategy is finalised.