

London Borough of Enfield

Full Council meeting: 2 March 2021

Subject: Early Help For All Strategy 2021-2025
Cabinet Member: Cllr Rick Jewell, Children's Services
Executive Director: Tony Theodoulou, Executive Director, People
Project Sponsor: Anne Stoker, Director, Children and Families Services

Key Decision: N/A

Purpose of Report

1. This report presents our new Early Help For All strategy 2021-2025 and considers its implications on various sectors across the council.

Proposal

2. It is proposed that the new Early Help For All Strategy is agreed and adopted by Full Council.

Reason for proposal

3. The new Early Help For All Strategy 2021-2025 replaces our previous Family Resilience Strategy. It is our overarching strategy to further join up services across the Council and work with our partners to enhance resident's access to a range of co-ordinated prevention-based services.
4. There is a strong moral and economic case for effective prevention and early help for children, young people, families and individuals to tackle challenges early and prevent potential harm. The consequences of not intervening early are far-reaching and profound, as unresolved challenges can adversely affect people's health and happiness and lead to requiring intrusive and costly specialist services.
5. Our new Early Help For All 2021-2025 strategy sets out our approach to deliver effective early help for children, young people, families and vulnerable adults to support them to identify and address emerging issues and build resilience for the future. We recognise that many residents may initially turn to their immediate community for help. Therefore, this strategy also includes community empowerment and recognises the need to provide and support communities with the required knowledge and support to enable them to help themselves and one another

Relevance to the Council Plan

6. Early help is one of the cross-cutting themes of the refreshed Council Plan 2020-22, which renews our commitment to consider early help as our main approach to service delivery.
7. The Early Help For All Strategy sets out how we will join up services and enhance collaboration across the Council and our partners. This will help make every contact count, prevent service duplication and give timely advice and support to help our residents to become resilient and able to identify and address any future concerns at the outset.

Background

8. The new Early Help For All Strategy 2021-2025 replaces our previous Family Resilience/Early Help Strategy. This strategy sets out our approach to deliver effective early help to children, young people, families and vulnerable adults to build resilience and identify and address any concerns early.
9. It also sets out how we will join up services across the Council and work with our partners and the community to enhance resident's access to a range of co-ordinated prevention-based services.
10. Since the launch of the Family Resilience Strategy in 2016 we have achieved several successes for children and families in Enfield, embedding early help as an essential part of how we deliver services across children and educational services. This new strategy will build on these achievements and present a broader remit to deliver early help and prevention for everyone in Enfield joining up efforts across Children and Families and Adults' Services.

Main Considerations for the Council

11. Early help is one of the cross-cutting themes of the refreshed Council Plan 2020-22. Our key approach is to make early help a focus area across the Council services and the broader partnership to prevent issues from escalating and to reduce the demand for specialist services.
12. Early help is about providing support as early as possible to prevent problems escalating and causing distress; and giving people the help, they need to do more for themselves. This strategy sets out our vision **to work with our communities and partners to help everyone in Enfield to be resilient, overcome challenges and lead happy and fulfilling lives.** To deliver on this vision, the strategy is focussing on three priorities:

Priority one: Provide clear information, advice and support

Every individual in Enfield will have the knowledge of and access to the right support, at the right time, in the right place to tackle problems early.

Priority two: Empower communities

People will be motivated and empowered to take advantage of every opportunity the borough has to offer, to help themselves and their communities to make Enfield an even better place.

Priority three: Establish an effective early help system

There will be a whole-system approach to early help with strong leadership, a confident workforce and commitment to join-up and integrate resources and services.

Each of these priorities have supporting action areas and are linked with a few outcome measures for regular monitoring and review of implementation progress.

- **Developing the strategy**

13. Our Early Help for All Strategy has been developed using extensive research, engagement and consultation with partners, individuals and parents/carers through deliberative workshops, group discussions, focus groups and online survey. We have also considered the results of a recent engagement carried out with over 900 children and young people in Enfield to help us identify young people's priorities for how to make Enfield an even better place. The Enfield Poverty and Inequality Commission report have been taken into consideration to identify the best way forward to ensure equality of opportunities for everyone to access early help.

14. Furthermore, the Corporate Strategy Service have worked with colleagues including Councillors from across the council Directorates during the development process of this strategy. This approach has ensured that we have captured and assessed all the relevant issues and have gained strong support for this strategy to be an overarching approach to provide early help to all residents.

15. This strategy has also been presented and discussed at the Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Panel. The Panel reaffirmed the importance and relevance of early help and preventative approach as one of the most morally and financially justifiable approach to service delivery. They also provided helpful and constructive feedback which has been addressed in further discussions with relevant services.

- **Governance and monitoring arrangements**

16. The Early Help Strategic Board (redesigned specifically to support the early help strategy from the previous Family Resilience Board) will oversee the successful delivery of this strategy. This board will be accountable for implementing the strategy's action plan and reviewing progress on a quarterly basis. There will also be a small task group formed from the members of the Early Help Strategic Board to develop a detailed operational plan to deliver on each priority of the strategy.
17. The board will review the outcome measures set out in the strategy on an annual basis and report progress updates to the Safeguarding Children Partnership and Safeguarding Adults Board. The annual review of the strategy will also include refreshing the strategy if deemed necessary based on changes in circumstances and lessons learnt.

Safeguarding Implications

18. The concept of early help reflects the widespread recognition that it is better to identify and deal with problems early rather than to respond when difficulties accumulate and demand specialist services. Early help includes universal and targeted services designed to reduce needs or prevent small problems from becoming entrenched and difficult to address. This will improve outcomes for vulnerable children, young people, families and adults and avoid costly statutory interventions.
19. Similarly, strong and effective universal and additional early help services can help people to 'step down' from higher levels of need where they would require specialist services. This means that vulnerable adults and children receiving our care are more likely to achieve their full potential and experience positive outcomes independently or with less intervention from professionals.

Public Health Implications

20. Delivering effective early help will contribute to improving outcomes for children and adults including in relation to their mental health and wellbeing. Early help is not the responsibility of one service or partner, it is about everyone having the required knowledge and motivation to support one another. Therefore, this strategy focuses on community empowerment as an efficient and sustainable way of seeking and delivering help at the earliest opportunity. To do this, it reflects the principles of Making Every Contact Count (MECC), which is about using routine and daily contacts with the residents to take positive steps to improve their own health and wellbeing.

This strategy is also strongly linked to the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy and our ambition to deliver Health in All Policies (HiAP). Furthermore, it considers the impact of public health crisis caused by COVID-19 pandemic, setting out how we will adapt services to continue to deliver early help despite the restrictions imposed by this crisis.

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

21. The strategy sets out our approach to make sure that all Enfield residents have equal access to early help services that respond to their needs, regardless of their protected characteristics, socio-economic status or location within the borough. This strategy considers the recommendations of the independent report 'All Things Being Equal: Report of the Enfield Poverty and Inequality Commission' (Jan 2020). Furthermore, we have ensured that this strategy is in line with our new Fairer Enfield Policy (in progress) and supports the delivery of our equalities objectives enshrined in this policy.
22. During the development process of this strategy we have engaged with groups of people with a specific protected characteristic such as age and religion. Regarding religion, for example, we have engaged with residents belonging to different faiths through our Faith Forum and through an online survey. We have gathered their views about how to foster better relations between those with and without a faith. As a result, we have identified a number of key actions in the strategy to provide accessible information, advice and support through enhancing partnership with different community groups and networks.
23. To further analyse the impact of this strategy on various groups in the borough, we have completed a robust Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) enclosed with this report as appendix 2. This assessment has confirmed that this strategy will not have any adverse impacts on any groups listed under the protected characteristics. The EqIA also demonstrates that early help is in fact one of the main approaches to ensure access to services is equitable and need based resulting in equal outcomes for all residents. This means that if we are able to identify individuals and families who face challenges early on we will prevent them experiencing difficult life circumstances and enjoy fulfilling lives as the rest of their peers in their protected group and community.

Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

24. The strategy will not lead to an increase or decrease in energy consumption. It will not have any adverse impacts on the environment.

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision and related work is not taken

25. If early help is not offered, there is a very real risk that some people will experience significant harm that sometimes can be irreversible. In the case of children, their physical, cognitive, social and emotional development may be impaired affecting their life chances and futures. The consequences of not intervening early are far-reaching and profound, as unresolved challenges can adversely affect people's health and happiness. Adults will encounter distressing health and wellbeing issues that would require specialist services -

they will experience social isolation/loneliness and will be in need of premature specialist care and support.

26. In addition to these human costs, a lack of early help provision will add financial strain on the Council and our partners.

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision is taken and actions that will be taken to manage these risks

27. There is a risk that the financial pressure on the council will lead to cuts in preventative or early help services which are mostly non-statutory. To mitigate against this, the strategy has envisaged enhancing partnership with communities and helping them make the best use of what Enfield has to offer and function without much reliance on additional professional support.

28. Furthermore, the Early Help Strategic Board will retain oversight and actively drive the delivery of this strategy. The board will assess progress and identify any implementation issues and advocate to leverage support from all relevant partners. This will include identifying new funding opportunities to not only maintain the current level of early help provision but also develop further capacity to be able to respond to the needs of the residents.

Financial Implications

29. There are no specific financial implications resulting from this policy which will be delivered with existing resources. If any additional resources are required in the future, then these would need to be brought forward for a future decision. However, it is noted that with the continuing demand for Adult & Children's Social Care and Housing Services, early help and early intervention will help prevent and manage future demand and the corresponding financial pressure, all of which are a key element of the Council's Medium -Term Financial Strategy.

Legal Implications

30. Unusually adding nothing under Legal Implications. The "commitment to consider early help as our main approach to service delivery" cannot replace or detract from all existing statutory obligations and the Strategy's underlying overall approach of 'prevention being better than cure' has significant potential to contribute to the aims outlined.

Workforce Implications

31. One of the three priorities of the strategy is to help establish an effective early help system with confident workforce who have the capacity to offer effective early help. To help achieve this priority we will make sure that all practitioners across the council and partner agencies have access to the right training, information, guidance and supervision and support at the right time which

equips them for taking an effective early help approach to working with families and individuals.

32. For effective sharing of information between practitioners and local organisations and agencies is essential for early identification of needs, assessment and coordinated service provision. We will work towards establishing a single assessment framework to ensure that all relevant partners can access and use the information they need to do their jobs in a timely and coordinated manner. So, this strategy will have implications on capacity building of staff across the relevant services to help improve effectiveness of our early help offer.

Property Implications

33. No implications

Other Implications

34. None

Options Considered

35. No other options have been considered as the previous Family Resilience/ Early help strategy came to an end and this strategy replaces that.

Conclusions

36. The new Early Help strategy replaces our previous Family Resilience strategy and sets out a clear commitment and framework to collectively deliver effective early help for children, young people, families and vulnerable adults to support them to identify and address emerging issues and build resilience for the future. This strategy is presented to be agreed and adopted by Full Council.

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Date of report

15 February 2021

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Early Help For All Strategy

Appendix 2 – Equality Impact Assessment report