



# The City of London

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*Early Help Strategy 2019 – 2021*

*‘The right help, at the right time, in the right place’*

This Early Help Strategy has been developed in conjunction with the City of London’s Early Help Sub-group and approved by the City of London Children’s Partnership Board (CPB). This document will outline how the City of London, in coordination with its partner agencies and wider community stakeholders, intends to implement its Early Help offer



## What is Early Help?

Early Help is about identifying needs and offering advice, support and direct interventions at the earliest point of discovery. Early Help may occur at any point from pre-birth and foundation stage through to the teenage years (up to the age of 25 for young people with special educational needs and disabilities).

The purpose of our interventions is to empower children, young people and their families to support themselves and prevent a recurrence of problems, avoiding the potential for escalation, whilst at the same time, helping to reduce the number of families requiring statutory intervention.

Support may be offered early in life, or early after the emergence of an identified need. Such needs can include, but are not limited to;

- Families with significant housing needs.
- Families where a parent/carer is experiencing mental health difficulties.
- Children with Special Educational Needs such as Autism Spectrum Disorder.
- Children and young people experiencing stress and anxiety.
- Children and young people living with conduct and behaviour disorders.
- Children who have a caring role for another member of their family (young carers)

## How we help

Early Help typically offers a range of support services tailored to individual circumstances and needs. Some common services include:

- Advice and advocacy.
- Signposting to universal or specialist services.
- One-to-one practical and emotional support for children, young people or parents.
- Play therapies and direct work with children.
- Parenting support.
- Short breaks for children with additional needs and for young carers.

The Early Help model encourages collaboration between those providing the services and the people using them. We support children, young people and their families to play a key role in prioritising positive change and in shaping their own plan with the aim of improving outcomes and helping children and young people to achieve their full potential.

*The right help, at the right time, in the right place*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This Early Help Strategy has been developed in conjunction with the City of London Corporation's Early Help Sub-Group and approved by the City of London Children's Partnership Board (CPB). This document will outline how the City of London, in cooperation with its partner agencies and wider community stakeholders, intends to implement its Early Help offer, for the City's children and families in order to better improve life chances, particularly for those amongst the most disadvantaged families, as well as those experiencing complex and multiple difficulties.

This strategy has been underpinned by a collaborative approach so that all partner agencies involved in delivering Early Help have committed to working universally in adopting a whole systems approach as well as working towards using the whole family centred systemic model. This will ensure children; young people and their families receive Early Help as soon as difficulties emerge.

The overriding purpose of this strategy is to ensure children, young people and their families receive accessible co-ordinated Early Help when they need it. Early Help will be available as a continuum, from universal preventative approaches through to more targeted help for families experiencing complex and multiple difficulties. Universal preventative approaches and support are provided throughout the whole life cycle to the entire population to prevent problems from developing. Targeted interventions are offered to particular children, young people and families with existing risk factors and vulnerabilities in order to reduce the severity of existing problems and to prevent problems from escalating or becoming entrenched.

The City's Early Help offer is the responsibility of all strategic partners in the City. It has been co-developed with children, young people and their families and takes into consideration the social capital already present in local communities.

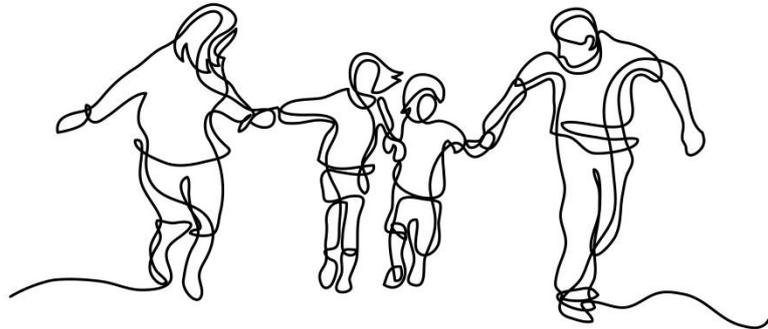
Social capital describes the pattern and intensity of networks among people and the shared values which arise from those networks. Definitions of social capital vary, but the main aspects include citizenship, 'neighbourliness', social networks and civic participation.

Early Help refers both to the help in the critical early years of a child's life, when the fundamental building blocks of future development are laid, and to the help throughout children's, young people's and families' lives. It is crucial that Early Help becomes available as quickly as possible.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Professor Eileen Munroe's review on Child Protection, 2011

Research from the Early Intervention Foundation<sup>2</sup> states that “*Early intervention works to reduce the risk factors and increase the protective factors in a child’s life*”. Early Help approaches usually focus on supporting four key aspects of a child’s development. These are: Cognitive, physical, behavioural and social and emotional development, as these have the potential to make the biggest difference in children’s lives.



Proactive approaches are more effective than reactive services and less onerous in the long run. They are also more effective in improving the life chances of children, young people and their families.

[This strategy is not static, and its implementation will be regularly reviewed and revised. This strategy is a key strand of the City’s new Children and Young People’s Plan \(2018 - 2021\)](#)

For more information about Early Help services and activities and events for families and young people please visit [www.fyi.cityoflondon.gov.uk](http://www.fyi.cityoflondon.gov.uk)

Visit our Local Offer pages for information, advice and support for children with SEND aged 0-25 living in the city. [localoffer.cityoflondon.gov.uk](http://localoffer.cityoflondon.gov.uk)

## **2. THE FINANCIAL, NATIONAL AND LOCAL CONTEXT FOR EARLY HELP**

### **The financial context**

Early Intervention can mean two things in a local context. Research says that putting support in place for children and young people in early years can lead to significantly greater outcomes in later life, and also shows that working to intervene earlier in the life of a family with escalating complex needs can help reduce the impact on statutory services.

The first of these strategies can be viewed as a longer-term intervention, with system-level effects which has the potential to take decades before there is a clear reduction in demand for statutory services. The second strategy focusses on anticipating and preventing need by working at a pre-statutory level proactively with children/young people and their families, to lead to a quicker realisation of benefits in terms of reductions in demand for statutory services. (Parish & Bryant March 2019).<sup>3</sup> Money spent on preventative programmes is often

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.eif.org.uk/why-it-matters/what-is-early-intervention/>

<sup>3</sup> Natalie Parish & Ben Bryant The key enablers of developing an effective partnership based early help offer: final research report, 2019

more cost effective than later intervention during the course of a child's life, when problems may have escalated or become bigger.

It is also important to acknowledge that, in the short to medium term, an Early Help offer may expand costs through raising awareness of available services and thus increasing demand for them. It is equally important to acknowledge that Early Help may not be the solution or right service for all, a number of children and families will continue to require statutory social work interventions, public health services in addition to specialist costly support services.

### **The national context**

Services for children, young people and families are operating within a context of rapid change. The key national drivers which impact on the development of this strategy include:

- The Children & Social Work Act 2017, which outlines local arrangements for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.
- a reduction in public spending
- Improving lives: Helping Workless Families<sup>4</sup>, which includes reducing parental conflict.
- a clearer and strengthened focus on safeguarding and protecting vulnerable children
- the Children and Families Act 2014, which includes:
  - transformation of the system for children and young people with special educational needs, including those with disabilities (SEND), giving children, young people and their parents greater control and choice in decisions about their future
  - reform of childcare to ensure a whole-systems approach to delivering high-quality early years education and childcare
  - a requirement for local authorities to publish a Local Offer in partnership with children and young people and their families
- NHS reforms including:
  - the development of local clinical commissioning groups in partnership with other boroughs
  - changes to public health nursing
- the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011, including the appointment of Police and Crime Commissioners and their role in supporting preventative initiatives in the community
- a national policy focus on Early Help and turning around the lives of particularly disadvantaged families and those with multiple and complex needs; this will require local authorities and statutory partners to secure enough provision of local Early Help services for families which do not meet the criteria for children's social care services

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<sup>4</sup> Improving Lives: Helping Workless Families, Department for Work and Pensions, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/improving-lives-helping-workless-families>

- The NHS Healthy Child Programme.
- Agencies will work within the legal framework of the Equality Act 2010, to ensure it values the diversity of the community and celebrates inclusiveness.

### **The local context**

The City has a strong foundation from which to build and deliver a robust multi-agency Early Help strategy. It has a well-established community-based infrastructure and there are a number of complementary work-streams across health, education, housing, policing, safeguarding and community safety that will contribute to its Early Help offer as well as the City and Hackney Clinical Commissioning Group's Children, Young People, Maternity and Family Workstream and Prevention Workstream. These are continually developing in response to changing needs.

The monitoring and reporting of the work of Early Help services is through the **Early Help Sub-group**, which in turn reports to the City's **Children Partnership Board**, part of the City of London Corporation's governance structure.

In addition, the **Multi-Agency Practitioners Forum**, the **Domestic and Sexual abuse Forum as well as the Children Centre Services Board** provide an opportunity for front-line staff within a multi-agency context to discuss practice matters, encouraging consistent and effective service delivery.

### **3. VISION AND EARLY HELP AMBITIONS FOR CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE**

#### ***The City of London's Children and Young People's Vision***

This strategy reflects and will support the delivery of the vision and priorities set out in our *Children and Young People's Plan 2018-21* (CYPP).

**The Vision is 'to be the best place possible for children and young people to grow up. We will work in partnership to provide a safe, inclusive and supportive environment where all our children and young people, regardless of background and circumstance, feel they belong. We will provide high quality services, world-class education and excellent opportunities that enable them to live healthily, develop resilience, access meaningful employment, achieve their potential and thrive'.<sup>5</sup>**

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<sup>5</sup> City of London Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) 2018-2021 (Page 7)

## Early Help Ambitions

That all children, young people and families within the City of London will be safe, happy, healthy and have opportunities to access targeted Early Help, regardless of their level of need, in order that they can reach their full potential.

The Early Help offer will be personalised and considerate of the whole family. It will be delivered through a multi-agency approach, using the latest research and supported by evidence-based practice and tools.

A systems wide approach to the delivery of service(s) with the flexibility to adapt to the needs of the City of London community.

We will endeavour to reduce the demand for higher cost specialist services and achieve greater use of community based universal preventative services.

We will aim to improve the life outcomes of families, whilst promoting their independence and develop their resilience.

## 4. OUR PRINCIPLES

In providing Early Help support to children, young people and families, the following principles will underpin our work and guide the way in which we deliver Early Help services:

We will:

- **Be evidenced based:** The City of London's Early Help service will be informed by an evidence-based approach to identifying local needs. We will also utilise evidence-based practices such as Systemic practice, Solihull and 'Think Family'.
- **Be inclusive:** our services are accessible to any and all that require them, as well as being proactive in engaging with families whom historically, have had low levels of engagement and would benefit from Early Help Services.
- **Collaborate:** We will provide a holistic approach to the delivery of services and ensure we work together with other partner agencies, to offer an integrated early help offer.
- **Identify:** We will identify the need for help and support early, in order to intervene at the earliest stage. We will also identify those families that can be stepped-down



from statutory services to Early Help, to reduce the number of referrals that reach the need for statutory intervention.

- **Support:** We will support vulnerable families to support their children to achieve positive outcomes, whilst helping parents, children and young people build resilience.
  - **Provide Expertise:** There is access to child protection social work expertise for those practitioners providing Early Help for children and young people who are on the boundary of statutory social care. We will also involve and maintain the knowledge and skills of other specialist services.
  - **Commission:** Decide how to make best use of the resources available in order to make the biggest impact on outcomes in the most effective, efficient and sustainable way. We will also use families to inform our commissioning services.
  - **Personalise:** Early help provides personalised, whole family focussed intervention plans, with the intention to be adaptable to sustain change.
  - **Use a whole family approach:** Whole family approach requires an understanding of the key 'family' structure and composition as well as being alert to wider familial issues that may have a bearing on the overall well-being and mental health of the child.
  - **Empower:** Practitioners in Early Help will seek to always empower children, young people and families to make the changes they need in order to improve their circumstances.
  - **Be efficient:** Resources will be allocated efficiently and effectively, thus providing high quality outcomes and good value for money.
  - **Build community cohesion:** We will help communities build social emotional intelligence, capacity and networks. This may help prevent social isolation, crime and anti-social behaviour, as well as support enterprise and education.
  - **Safeguard:** Early Help will safeguard and promote the health and wellbeing of children, young people and families.
  - **Deliver:** The City will deliver a visible integrated local offer that is accessible to everyone.
  - **Transition:** Children and young people will be supported through the key transitions which take place during their lives. For example: transition between schools and services or Children's services to Adults services.
  - **Accountable:** We will be accountable to our stakeholders, partner agencies, families, children and young people of the City of London.
- Position:** We will seek to understand the families' position, by seeing things from their perspective; looking at their lived experiences through their 'lens'.

## **5. OUR OBJECTIVES**

The City of London's Children's Partnership Board monitors the services the City provides to children, young people and their families in partnership with the relevant stakeholders who work towards improving the life chances of children and young people.

The board abides by a strategy to improve outcomes for children and young people. As part of this strategy the following five Early Help objectives have been identified:

### **OBJECTIVE 1:**

**To ensure that all children and young people are safe in all aspects of their lives**



In order to achieve this we will ensure that safeguarding of children and young people is high on the agenda of all partner agencies involved, in order to identify, manage, and minimize risk. In order to facilitate this, Early Help will provide the first point of call for agencies using the Multi Agency Referral Form

(MARF) to refer families for Early Help support.

### **OBJECTIVE 2:**

**To continually develop and improve the Early Help Service**

This will be achieved by continued joint working with the Multi Agency Practitioner Forum (MAPF), taking the views of parent/carers and young people, which can include taking soundings from forums (Parent/Carer forum, youth forum) whilst also ensuring we remain accountable to the Early Help sub group.

Early Help will take lead role within The City, for rolling out the Department for Work and Pensions programme on Reducing Parental Conflict (RPC). In addition to this, we will share and apply knowledge and research related to Early Help and share evidence-based good practice.

### **OBJECTIVE 3:**

**To understand, identify and respond quickly to the needs of children and young people and their families across the continuum of need**

We will endeavour to identify needs and take appropriate action early, in order to avoid escalation to statutory social care. Our hope is that children and young people who are stepped down from social care will sustain the progress they have made, with the goal that families will eventually no longer require targeted Early Help support.

For this to work in practice, there must be fewer cases being stepped up to social care from Early Help, then are being stepped down into Early Help.

**OBJECTIVE 4:**

**To support families to achieve their full potential**

By providing an excellent Early Help offer and understanding the local needs, we will help provide families with the help and support they require in order to maximize their full potential.

Every family referred to the Early Help service will have a named lead professional who will provide expert support, information, guidance and advice.

**OBJECTIVE 5:**

**To address the health inequalities of children and young people in the City**

Ensure the next generation has a stake in the delivery of services and benefits from The City's success by addressing health inequalities and problems with children and young people, including emotional and mental health and wellbeing.

**OBJECTIVE 6:**

**To provide good multi-agency working relationships which will help to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families**

Early Help will provide co-ordinated provision at both strategic and operational levels across agencies and with our partners and stakeholders to support children, young people and their families, taking into account national guidance around child protection and safeguarding<sup>6</sup> ( this objective is linked to objective 4.6 of the City of London Early Years Strategy).

## **6. OUR KEY INDICATORS OF IMPACT AND SUCCESS**

As a result of our strategy, all children and their families from targeted groups in the City should be able to access the support they need, when they need it. Outcomes for children, particularly those in target groups who might otherwise not have done so well, should be excellent and continue to adapt to changing needs.

To achieve this, we will evaluate the impact and success of our strategy on an annual basis against the following four areas:

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2018>

## **1. Planning and delivering Early Help**

- All children, young people and their families from targeted groups can access the support they need, when they need it. Outcomes for children, particularly those in ‘target groups’ who might otherwise not have done so well, are excellent.
- Early Help services are provided for ages 0–18 years (25 years for young people with S.E.N.D) with evidence to show they work. (Early Help are considering working with young adults up to the age of 25. We will explore a proposal to look at what kind of support, if any, The City could feasibly be expected to offer)
- There are clear, aligned processes for identifying, assessing and providing appropriate help to children and families at an early stage, which are understood and agreed by all local partners.
- Information on family needs and strengths is being shared efficiently all the time.
- All staff have an excellent understanding of Early Help and the roles they play. They are given high-quality training and support to do their jobs.
- Staff always deliver Early Help in a joined-up way.

## **2. Evaluating our impact**

- Everyone is working to the same ultimate goals for improving children’s lives and have agreed measures to check how well they are meeting them.
- All services have their success and impact measured in a good quality way.
- This information helps to inform planning about how services can run better.
- The use of the Team Around the Family review plans and impact scores, will allow us to evaluate and evidence the effectiveness of service delivery.

## **3. Leading effective Early Help**

- All local partnerships play a part in delivering Early Help.

## **4. A focus on the family**

- Families are involved in designing and delivering services.
- Families are able to access the information they need from the first point of contact.
- Families are at the centre of the support provided, and this support takes account of family and community strengths which are a big part of local delivery.

The following output measures, which constitute a proxy indicator of an effective co-ordinated Early Help offer, will also be adopted:

- an increase in the number of MARFs completed across agencies.
- an increase in the number of targeted families accessing universal services.
- an increase in take-up of targeted services within the universal offer (for example, the First Steps service).
- an increase in the number of MARFs referrals from partners rather than an increase in full CAFs.

- Higher immunisation take-up rate than the national and London local authority rates.
- Reduction in the number of Child Protection Plans, excluding unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC).
- Lower number of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) than the national and London local authority rates.
- Increase in the numbers accessing information, advice and guidance – (Linked to the Early Years Strategy 2019-2021).

## **7. GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

*Working Together to safeguard children in Education (2018)*<sup>7</sup> requires local agencies to have in place effective ways of identifying emerging problems and potential unmet needs for individual children and their families. It also requires local agencies to work together to put processes in place for the effective assessment of the needs of individual children who may benefit from Early Help services.

Therefore, the delivery of an effective Early Help offer is not the responsibility of a single agency. It requires a whole-family approach, owned by all stakeholders working with children, young people and families. These include health services, the police and probation services, schools and education services, adult services, housing services and voluntary and community organisations.

Consequently, governance for this strategy will be provided by the Children’s Partnership Board via the Early Help Sub-group.

In view of the importance of safeguarding children and young people, the City and Hackney Safeguarding Children Board will also provide scrutiny and challenge.

The Early Help Sub-group will provide the strategic drive, co-ordination and oversight by receiving regular performance and outcome indicator reports on progress against objectives, while the partners that comprise the sub-group will be the delivery vehicle for implementation of the strategy.

The Children Partnership Board will monitor progress against the strategic objectives on a quarterly basis and challenge the Early Help Sub-group on the effective delivery of the strategy via regular outcome indicator reports.

<sup>7</sup> *Working Together to Safeguard Children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children*, HM Government (March 2018).

