THE CITY OF LONDON EARLY HELP STRATEGY

‘The right help, at the right time, in the right place’
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Early Help Strategy has been developed in conjunction with the City of London’s (the City’s) Early Intervention and Prevention Sub-Group and approved by the City of London Children’s Executive Board (CEB). The purpose of this document is to set out a strategy for the City that delivers an effective, cohesive and coherent Early Help offer for the City’s children and young people and their families.¹

1.2 This strategy sets out how the City’s strategic partners, including voluntary organisations, can deliver Early Help in partnership with children and young people and their families to improve life chances, particularly for those families experiencing complex and multiple difficulties. The strategy is designed in such a way that partners will be able to make a commitment to work differently, adopting a whole-systems approach to service delivery and provision that will ensure children, young people and their families receive Early Help as soon as difficulties emerge.

1.3 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 an 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.

1.4 This strategy is not static and its implementation will be regularly reviewed and revised.

1.5 This strategy is a key strand of the City’s new Children and Young People’s Plan (2015–17).

1.6 This strategy will link with population risk factors identified in, for example, the City and Hackney Joint Strategic Needs Assessment² and the City Supplement³ and will also link with local approaches such as the City’s ambition to end child poverty in the Square Mile.

¹ The terms children, young people or their families are sometimes used interchangeably throughout this document but always refer to children, young people and their families collectively.
² http://www.hackney.gov.uk/jsna.htm
1.7 The City’s overall aim is to develop a cohesive Early Help offer that builds protective factors and family resilience (enabling families to help themselves) and that reduces expenditure on costly reactive services.

1.8 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.

1.9 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.

Research has shown that higher levels of social capital are associated with better health, higher educational achievement, better employment outcomes and lower crime rates. In other words, those with extensive networks are more likely to be ‘housed, healthy, hired and happy’.

1.10 Early Help refers both to help in the critical early years of a child’s life, when the fundamental building blocks of future development are laid, and to help throughout children’s, young people’s and families’ lives. It is crucial that Early Help becomes available as quickly as possible. In essence, therefore, 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).

1.11 The ethical and financial rationale and evidence base for providing Early Help through a whole family model is clear. Many recent publications highlight the need for strategic partners to provide a co-ordinated, targeted and evidence-based Early Help approach, particularly for families with multiple and complex needs.

1.12 The message is clear: preventative services are cheaper and more effective than reactive services. They are also more effective in improving the life chances of children and young people and their families.
2. THE FINANCIAL, NATIONAL AND LOCAL CONTEXT FOR EARLY HELP

The financial context

2.1 Providing Early Help is paradoxically more challenging yet more urgent at a time of significantly reduced public expenditure. When there is less expenditure on resources, it is increasingly necessary to ensure that these resources are targeted where they will make the greatest difference. Early Help has the potential to deliver services in the most cost-effective way, reducing the need for more costly intensive interventions when situations have become more complex and entrenched.

2.2 It is, therefore, important to note that intervening early is more cost effective in the long term and is usually supported by disinvestment in more expensive intensive interventions.

2.3 It is also important to acknowledge that, in the short to medium term, an Early Help offer may escalate costs through raising awareness of available services and thus increasing demand for them. It is equally important to acknowledge that Early Help is not a ‘silver bullet’; a number of children and families will continue to require intensive and costly support.

The national context

2.4 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:

- a reduction in public spending
- 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 child care to ensure a whole-systems approach delivering high-quality early years education and child care
  - reform of the family justice system to tackle delays when children are taken into care
  - 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 commissioning groups
  - 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 sufficient provision of local Early Help services for families which do not meet the criteria for children’s social care services
• The Healthy Child Programme (see Appendix 1, page 14).

The local context

2.5 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, safeguarding and community safety that will contribute to its Early Help offer. These are continually developing in response to changing needs. Appendix 1, page 14, provides examples of existing infrastructure for illustrative purposes only.

2.6 The monitoring and reporting of the work of Early Help services is through the Early Intervention Prevention Sub-group, which in turn reports to the City’s Children Executive Board, part of the City of London Corporation’s governance structure.

In addition, the Multi-Agency Practitioners Forum, a monthly meeting for partners delivering Early Help services, provides an opportunity for front-line staff within a multi-agency context to discuss practice matters, encouraging consistent and effective service delivery.
3. OUR CHALLENGES AND AMBITIONS FOR EARLY HELP

Our Challenge

3.1 Our challenge is to secure different ways of working in and across services through the development of a co-ordinated whole-systems approach that also incorporates health and well-being, community safety, education, employment and housing.

Our Ambitions

3.2. All families, particularly those who are disadvantaged or who have complex or multiple needs, will have access to co-ordinated Early Help to meet their needs as soon as their difficulties are identified.

3.3 The offer will be personalised, and will consider the whole family. It will be delivered through a multi-agency approach, using evidence-based tools and supported by evidence-based practice (such as the Solihull Approach).

3.4 Children and young people and their families will live safe, healthy and fulfilling lives and develop into responsible adult citizens, thereby breaking intergenerational cycles of disadvantage.

3.5 Families will become more resilient and develop their capacity to prevent and resolve problems.

3.6 We aim to reduce demand for higher cost specialist services and to increase the use of community-based universal preventative services.

3.7 Social capital and resilience within our local communities will be identified and strengthened.
4. OUR PRINCIPLES

4.1 To have maximum impact, we will be transparent about our local arrangements to help children and young people and families early, with improved co-ordination between statutory partners, support from local practitioners and clarity about the local services available to help families.

4.2 In making these local arrangements, we will ensure that:

- provision of Early Help is informed by an evidence-based approach to identifying local need
- our Early Help offer supports children and young people and their families across the whole life cycle, encompassing their physical and mental health and well-being, education, training and employment
- arrangements are in place to identify children who are suffering or likely to suffer harm
- 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
- there is clear resourcing of local arrangements

4.3 The effective provision of Early Help will enable partners to address actual and potential problems, preventing them from becoming more serious and thus requiring more specialist (and expensive) support services. It will:

- ensure that resources are targeted on identified need
- develop locally responsive solutions for issues and concerns
- use the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) as a holistic assessment, focusing on the whole family
- embed a child-and-family-centred pathway which clearly identifies the routes in and out of services, ensuring a seamless experience for families
- ensure that all practitioners have a shared vision and skills which enable them to place families at the heart of shaping and implementing solutions
- help people to help themselves, stop problems from recurring, and help them to solve their problems, thus improving their quality of life
- strengthen the capacity of universal preventative services, including those delivered through children’s centres and education settings, leisure and sports settings, health services and the police – the intention is for as much Early Help as possible to be accessed through universal settings
- embed a whole-family approach where services are based on knowledge of the individual, the family and the community, involving families as partners in planning to build capacity and resilience.
5. OUR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1:
To ensure that all children and young people are safe in all aspects of their lives

We will work together to:
• put safeguarding on everyone’s agenda
• manage and minimise risk
• provide strong leadership by allowing and supporting agencies to use the CAF.

Our indicators for success will be:
• fewer escalations to children’s social services
• an increase in the number of MARFs\(^4\) referrals to Early Help rather than escalations to full CAFs
• a common and agreed understanding of the City’s Thresholds of Need as a process for identifying, assessing and providing appropriate help to children and families at an early stage.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2:
To continually develop and improve our service provision

We will work together to:
• listen to what children and families have to say about what best helps them to prevent problems from occurring or escalating through regular evaluation
• share and apply knowledge gained through evidence-based practice and research including, for example, the Knowledge Transfer Programme with Goldsmiths University.

Our indicators for success will be:
• services that are needs led and transparently shaped by and for children and young people and their families
• assessments that are co-produced with young people, their families and carers
• evaluation processes that are built into service planning and delivery and are designed to clearly demonstrate the difference we have made
• having the impacts of all services measured in a good quality way
• using this information to help inform planning about how to run services better.

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\(^4\) The MARFs is the established referral process into Early Help. A pre-assessment checklist codes the relevant personal details and support needs in a referral form which is sent to the Early Help team.
STRATEGIC 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 work together to:
- support the focusing of resources from crisis intervention to prevention
- ensure that children and young people and their families receive Early Help as soon as they need it
- ensure that information, advice and guidance are available for easy access to support services
- anticipate and identify need rather than reacting to it.

Our indicators for success will be:
- fewer escalations to children’s social care
- that children and young people who are referred to be stepped down will sustain the progress they have made
- increased engagement in universal services.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4:
To support families to achieve their full potential

We will work together to:
- provide outstanding information, advice and guidance
- ensure that parents and carers are well informed and that they have the resources they need to make the right decisions and access the support they need.

Our indicators for success will be:
- that all partners have a strong understanding of Early Help and the roles they can play in delivering it
- good quality information and advice about the range of services available, presented in ways that children, young people and families wish to access it, helping to remove the stigma associated with getting help
- support that takes account of family and community strengths, which are a big part of local delivery
- that we are able to mitigate the impact of issues such as child poverty, health inequalities and economic disadvantage.
STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 5:
To provide the context for multi-agency partnerships to work together to improve outcomes for children and young people and their families

We will work together to:
• ensure that there is effective joint working sustained by a shared language and shared processes.

Our indicators for success will be:
• well co-ordinated Early Help provision at both strategic and operational levels across agencies and our partners and stakeholders.
6. OUR KEY INDICATORS OF IMPACT AND SUCCESS

6.1 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.

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

1. Planning and delivering Early Help
   • All children 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 0–19 years with evidence to show they work.
   • 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.

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 support takes account of family and community strengths which are a big part of local delivery.
6.3 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
- The maximum take-up of 2–4-year-old early learning for those who are entitled
- Higher immunisation take-up rate than the national and London local authority rates
- Reduction in the number of Child in Need plans open to children’s social care (excluding looked-after children and child protection plans)
- 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.
7. GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

7.1 *Working Together* (2013)\(^5\) 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.

7.2 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.

7.3 Consequently, governance for this strategy will be provided by the CEB via the Early Intervention and Prevention Sub-group.

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

7.5 The Early Intervention and Prevention 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.

7.6 The CEB will monitor progress against the strategic objectives on a quarterly basis and challenge the Early Intervention and Prevention Sub-group on the effective delivery of the strategy via regular outcome indicator reports.

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\(^5\) *Working Together to Safeguard Children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children*, HM Government (March 2013).
8. SHARING AND DEVELOPING OUR EARLY HELP APPROACH

8.1 This document provides an overview of the current state of readiness to deliver an Early Help offer in the City across partners. An implementation plan details agreed actions and resources, alongside a performance framework to achieve the objectives of the strategy.
APPENDIX 1: A SUMMARY OF THE CITY’S EARLY HELP SERVICES

The following is not an exhaustive guide to our services. For more comprehensive information, please also refer to the City’s Resource Guide for Practitioners.

1. INFORMATION, ADVICE AND GUIDANCE

There is a network of organisations providing information, advice and guidance (IAG) to families in the City through a range of channels:

*Family and Young People’s Information Service (FYi)*
FYi maintains a database of services accessible online through the FYi Directory. This provides comprehensive searchable information for residents, including details of services, activities and events for families, and is updated on a daily basis. It also provides professionals with a valuable tool with which to assist families. FYi increasingly uses social media to reach its target audiences and signpost people to the Directory. It also conducts a proactive outreach programme designed to engage local families with services. By working on the ground with local parents, the FYi Outreach Officer is on hand to refer families into Early Help should they require it. Every week she visits various parents’ activities around the City, offering information and advice. Many of these sessions take place in the City’s three lending libraries.

[www.fyi.cityoflondon.gov.uk](http://www.fyi.cityoflondon.gov.uk)
[fyi@cityoflondon.gov.uk](mailto:fyi@cityoflondon.gov.uk)
020 7332 1002
@CityFamilyInfo
facebook.com/CityFYi

*City Advice*
This is a free advice service for anyone who lives, works or studies in the City. This service helps resolve a wider range of problems including: Legal issues; debt and money problems; employment rights; welfare benefit entitlements.

[www.toynbeehall.org.uk/cityadvice](http://www.toynbeehall.org.uk/cityadvice)
020 7392 2919 (Mon-Fri 10am -6pm, Sat 11am-1pm)

*Benefits advice*
This is provided by the Department of Children and Community Services Benefits section based at the Barbican Estate Office, which advises residents and tenants on housing benefit and other welfare issues.
2. EDUCATION

**School Home Liaison**
Home visits are undertaken by the School Home Liaison Officer at Sir John Cass’s Foundation Primary School to identify if there are broader issues within the family that need addressing. These visits act as an advocate for some families, helping and brokering practical solutions with other agencies, for example Housing. Any issues or concerns are fed into the termly target-setting meetings.

**Counselling service**
A Tavistock Institute trained counsellor offers sessions to individual children and will see parents. They also work with school staff to help them offer consistent support and advice to children and their families.

3. CHILDREN CENTRE SERVICES

The City of London’s Sure Start Children’s Services are delivered across the Square Mile in a number of venues, including our own designated Children’s Centre at Sir John Cass’s Primary School.

**Cass Child and Family Centre**
The Cass Child and Family Centre combines the children's centre provision for the City of London with the nursery and reception classes of the Sir John Cass’s Primary School.
Telephone: 020 7626 6315  
Website: [Cass Child and Family Centre](#)

**Golden Lane Children’s Centre**
Golden Lane Children's Centre is located on the site of Prior Weston School. We work in partnership with Moreland and King Square Children's Centre to serve all the families in the local area with children under five.
Telephone: 020 7786 4800  
Website: Golden Lane Children's Centre

**Libraries**
The City’s three community lending libraries each offer a regular programme of activities for children under five and their parents, including Rhyme Time, Messy Play and Stay and Play sessions.
4. YOUTH PROVISION

City gateway

- Targeted youth provision incorporating 1:1 support when required; themed workshops, for example in partnership with our Substance Misuse Team; and a (at present) monthly Girls’ Group.
- Universal provision incorporating weekly open access youth clubs at the Artizan Centre and Green Box and holiday activities.
- Youth Participation incorporating rolling out the City of London Youth Participation Strategy, and engaging young people to establish the new youth forum and to take part in elections for the Chair of the City of London Youth Forum.

City Gateway also provides a detached and outreach team to identify and engage those young people not currently accessing, or preferring not to access, other youth provision.

Prospects

Prospects provide Information, Advice and Guidance on 14 – 19 options in education and careers to City residents (including Looked after Children and Care Leavers). This offer is extended to 25 for those with additional needs.

Telephone: 020 7332 1002

5. HEALTH

Maternity and antenatal services

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Artizan Street Library and Community Centre
artizanlib@cityoflondon.gov.uk
020 7332 3810

Barbican Children’s Library
barbicanlib@cityoflondon.gov.uk
020 7628 9447

Shoe lane Library
shoelane@cityoflondon.gov.uk
020 7583 7178
Homerton University Hospital provides maternity care for women during pregnancy, labour, birth and up until one month after birth.

Services include:
- Midwifery-led care at the hospital and in the community
- Consultant-led care at the hospital
- Hospital and home birth services
- Postnatal drop-ins in the community
- Neonatal care at the hospital

Contact
Homerton University Hospital Maternity Services
Homerton Row
London E9 6SR
020 8510 5555 – Switchboard
020 8510 7571/7146 - Antenatal clinic (Turpin Ward)
020 8510 7541/7561 – Postnatal (Templar Ward)
020 8510 7351 / 7352 - Delivery suite

Health visiting
Health visiting services in the City are provided by Team E at Homerton Hospital.
Health Visiting Service
Team E
Hackney Community College
50 Defoe Building
Hoxton Street
London N1 6LP
020 7683 4151
020 7683 4314 - Head of Nursing (Children's Community)
020 7683 5118 - Senior Community Nurse, Health Visiting

Healthy child programme
The Healthy Child Programme brings together a wide range of recommended programmes and interventions for local areas to consider. It outlines suggested roles and responsibilities to enable the progression of evidence-based service innovation and improvement.

Family Nurse Partnership
There is well established joint working between teams within the City and Hackney Children’s Health Visiting Service. Outreach and Family Support workers from FYi and the Cass Child and Family Centre attend baby clinics at the Neaman Practice. They also offer a home visit to all City-resident parents with a new birth.
6. HOUSING

**Housing Benefit advice**
This is provided by the Department of Children and Community Services Benefits section based at the Barbican Estate Office, which advises residents and tenants on housing benefit, council tax support and the emergency support scheme.
Tel: 020 7332 3937

**Housing advice & homelessness**
Sitting across Housing Services and People, the Housing Options Team and Homelessness Team provide comprehensive advice and assessment of housing needs. They assist City workers, residents and family members with a variety of housing-related options and support, with an emphasis on prevention of homelessness.
Tel: 020 7332 1237 or 020 7332 3452

**Rough sleepers**
The Rough Sleeper Projects Officer works within the Homelessness Team, to address concerns about rough sleepers in the city. An outreach service is provided by St Mungo’s Broadway on behalf of the City of London. They help people recover from the issues that create homelessness, providing a bed and support for people who are either homeless or at risk of homelessness.
Tel: 020 7426 9610.

**Tenancy Sustainment Team**
Based in Housing Services, this team provides a dedicated support service to identified vulnerable households living in the City. The team’s chief objective is to help people live independently and retain their tenancies and ensure that people are resettled into new properties. This is a referral based service only.

7. CHILDREN’S SOCIAL CARE

**Children and families team**
The Children and Families Team provides social care and family support to City residents. By applying a **single point of entry**, the Early Help and the Children and Families teams have a shared duty system and any requests or referrals are allocated according to level of need (in line with the City’s Thresholds of Need). The MARFs is the principal way professionals can refer in to the team for additional support or assessment. Tel: 0207 332 3621
Multi Agency Practitioners Forum (MAPF)
This is a monthly forum meeting for partners delivering Early Help services. The meeting provides an opportunity for front-line staff within a multi-agency setting to discuss practice matters, encouraging consistent and effective service delivery.