

London Borough of Barnet Early Help Strategy

Updated March 2018



Barnet
Safeguarding
Children Partnership

Resilient Families, Resilient Children

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Family Services vision is **to make Barnet the most Family Friendly Borough by 2020**. The way we do this is by empowering **Resilient Families: Resilient Children**.
 - The purpose of this strategy (which sits alongside a number of other strategies) is to provide a framework to organise our early help services, to monitor their success, and to drive improvement. This enables Barnet to tackle problems experienced by children and families as early as possible to improve outcomes, and to lower costs.
 - The strategy therefore has three guiding principle:
 - **i) intervene as early as possible;**
 - **ii) Take a whole family approach; and**
 - **iii) Use evidence based monitoring systems.**

 - The strategy provides a range of services and interventions as part of the continuum of help and support.
 - In order to organise our Early Help services around the specific issues facing Barnet families, we have conducted a needs analysis using local data. This analysis identifies 8 'themes' or problems which are most likely to drive poor outcomes for Barnet families: Domestic violence; alcohol and/or drug misuse; mental health; parenting and neglect; unemployment; involvement with police; missing from school; and child sexual exploitation. We found that the 'toxic trio' of DV, alcohol/drugs and mental health were the most prevalent causes of poor outcomes.
 - The Barnet Early Help Offer- i.e. the set of services which delivers our early help strategy- is formed of the following key parts:
 - 1) A Front door/triaging service- which assesses and signposts cases to early help services;
 - 2) A core set of council early help services: including 0-19 Early Help Hub teams (providing CAF and Family Resilience services), Children's Centres, Targeted Youth Services and
 - 3) a set of commissioned services, where the council procures early help services from third parties – for example Family Group Conference, Foyer
 - 4) Services provided by partners: such as services provided by the voluntary sector which are not commissioned by the Council.
- In terms of Governance, the Early Help strategy will be overseen by the 0-19 Partnership Board and the Barnet Safeguarding Children Partnership, with updates to other boards as appropriate (Health and Wellbeing Board, Community Safety Partnership).

2. DEFINITIONS, RATIONALE AND CONTEXT

What is Early Help?

Early Help is about:

- identifying the needs of children, young people and their families at an early stage;
- providing timely and targeted support to prevent the difficulties that they can experience from arising or escalating.¹

We know that effective Early Help can:

- improve outcomes for children and families; and
- significantly reduce costly support at a later stage.

What is the Early Help Offer?

The 'Early Help Offer' is the set of services which deliver an Early Help approach. The three strands of the Early Help Offer:

1. Prevention – enabling and encouraging parents to benefit from their universal entitlement to healthy, early years and education and to support the universal services' workforce to identify any emerging concerns or additional needs and to provide the appropriate response.
2. Intervention – to intervene early in the life of a problem for a child or family– we will work to up-skill the workforce across universal services to ensure that help is given in a timely way to avoid a problem becoming worse or entrenched, requiring intervention from statutory services.
3. Resilience – working in close alignment with children's social care services to ensure that those children in need of a statutory response to promote or protect their safety or welfare receive a timely response and to ensure that the strengths and resilience of families are well supported within an Early Help context wherever possible to prevent the need for statutory intervention. Early Help in Family Friendly Barnet works with families so that they develop their resilience to ensure good outcomes for their children. Early Help will enable children, families and communities to build capacity for developing resilient systems that enable good child development from early years to becoming a young adult. In this way children and young people in Barnet will have:
 - Stability and security
 - Aspirations to achieve in education
 - Benefit from positive friendships
 - Develop individual talents and interests
 - Believe in themselves and their ability to achieve their ambitions in life

The Early Help offer will be visualised by our online menu of interventions. This resource will have all the interventions the Council offers and any partners information who want to participate searchable online.

Why do we need an Early Help Strategy in Barnet?

This strategy provides a framework for the Council and partners to ensure that early help services are:

- effectively co-ordinated and targeted across the Partnership;

¹ 'Prevention' is the work of building capacity such that problems do not arise in the first place, whereas 'Early Intervention' involves responding to a problem before it escalates.

- success monitored;
- Subject to the process of continuous improvement.

In addition *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (March 2013) sets out requirements for local authorities to ensure a framework is in place to:

- identify children and families who would benefit from early help
- provide targeted early help services to improve the outcomes of a child
- The Ofsted Single Inspection Framework assesses the overall effectiveness of services and arrangements for children, including early help.

How can we work effectively with our partners?

Within the Council we have mapped our Early Help provision.

As part of developing the 0-19 Early Help Hubs there is a 0-19 partnership board and multi-agency development groups in each of the boroughs three localities.

A weekly multi agency panel will take place for each of the three localities to a lead professional and allocate resources to those contacts from MASH that require an Early Help (CAF) assessment.

Connection with Central Government – Troubled Families programme

Barnet was originally selected as the pilot for Phase 1. We have now commenced phase 2 of the programme which broadens the scope of what was classified as a positive outcome for children, young people and families. This is being accomplished within Barnet by embedding the delivery of the family first programme (troubled families) within the framework of the early help and statutory services that Barnet provides.

The strategic context

Nationally, there is growing consensus about the value and importance of early help. Graham Allen's reports have argued that Early Help can break the intergenerational cycles of dysfunction, and has the potential to significantly reduce later costs to the taxpayer as well as non-financial costs to society as a whole². The National Audit Office report on Early Action argues that a concerted shift away from reactive spending towards early action can result in better outcomes and greater value for money³. These views are echoed by the Troubled Families Programme (Family First in Barnet) and the Early Intervention Foundation.⁴ Barnet's own empirical research on cost avoidance supports the national literature. Our study of 109 family support cases suggests that early Help in these cases saved the public sector approximately £1.1m.⁵

² "Early Intervention – the next steps" in January 2011 Graham Allen
Early Intervention: Smart Investments, Massive Savings' was published in July 2011

³ <http://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Early-Action-full-report.pdf>

⁴ <http://www.earlyinterventionfoundation.org.uk/>

Children and Young People's Plan:

Barnet's Children and Young People's Plan 2016 to 2020 explains what the organisations represented on the Children's partnership will do to support children, young people and their families to lead happy and successful lives. One of the plan's cross-cutting priorities is Early Help. Progress against the plan is report to the Children's, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding committee.

Barnet Safeguarding Children Partnership priorities:

- Turnaround
- Right Intervention, Right Time (Thresholds)
- Improving Assessment for Children
- Improving Plans for Children
- Effective Communication and Engagement Driving Culture Change
- Governance, Leadership and Partnership

3. OUR PRINCIPLES TO EARLY HELP

We have developed core principles that that underpin our approach which have been signed up to by partners. They are:

Pathways and CAF Core Principles

One Pathway

- Barnet has an overarching pathway as a partnership document that sets out our common language and approach for meeting the child's early help needs, it is expected that each partner agency will map their own service against this document.

The child is at the centre of all we do

- Whilst we will have a whole family approach, work with the wider family should always be viewed in relation to 'how will this improve resilience and outcomes for the child'.

There are no hand off points

- Staff in universal services hold the child's hand and invite others in when additional help to build resilience is required.

We are all responsible and accountable

- Each individual is accountable and responsible for the Child – if you identify a need that can be met then you are required to take action.

Families tell their story once

- There is one uniformed Universal plus identification form to replace current forms that will help inform a CAF if needed.
- Each agency is responsible for providing appropriate representation as part of the team around the child, so that the needs of the Child are reflect in the plan. Where appropriate they will be the lead professional and/or provide an identified intervention
- There is a commitment from all partners to initiate a CAF when appropriate. The interventions used will have a clear outcome in the review and shared with all parties involved ensuring the voice of the child is heard.
- If there are issues in establishing the right services/team around the child during the CAF process, the CAF team and CAF panel will support.

Outcome monitoring principles

- The different purposes of services and, where relevant, different statutory frameworks they operate in should be respected, but this should not prevent the adoption of high level principles to monitor outcomes across the partnership.
- The focus should be on outcomes for the child or family, that support resilience, not on outputs
- Outcomes should be evidence-based wherever possible
- Outcomes should all contribute to achieving the Barnet Children and Young People Plan
- When a tool is used to measure progress for an individual, use of tools to monitor this with the child or family should be considered
- These principles apply alike to services provided and services commissioned

For the purpose of this document staff/worker/ individual is defined as those in an organisation who are paid or unpaid.

4. Continuum of Help and Support

- Barnet's Early Help services provide interventions as part of the continuum of Help and Support at universal, universal plus and targeted levels of need.

[See Continuum of Help and Support](#)

Needs analysis: What drives need in Barnet?

In order to design our early help services effectively we need to understand the needs of children and families in Barnet. Working with partners we analysed need across the borough and found.

Key points

- **Disability:** there are very few specific interventions identified as targeting this audience; interventions provided, where the course allows, should be inclusive of those disabled and those with special education needs.
- **Mental Health:** there needs to be more support/training for those providing universal services to help identify needs earlier.
- **Mental Health:** clearer transition planning/support for key points. Early Years to Schools to Adult.
- **Family support and parenting:** more/targeted services are needed at the start of parenthood to stop further escalation and needs to include mental health services for peri-natal.
- **Housing:** more programmes designed to prevent homelessness.
- **Health:** there needs to be more targeted programmes to prevent sexual health problems which Barnet is disproportionately affected.
- **Health:** there needs to be targeted prevention activity in Burnt Oak and Colindale which were flagged for a number of issues.

Geographical trends noted

- Burnt Oak was noted for high levels of domestic violence, child obesity, the highest rate of children in need and looked after children and troubled family cases
- Colindale was noted for excess weight at reception and Year 6 the highest rate of child protection plans and a high rate of Family First cases.

5. THE EARLY HELP OFFER: EARLY HELP IN PRACTICE

Given the above needs, the key services that make up the Early Help Offer are divided into 4 categories:

Triage

- Triage of cases is provided by **The Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)** – this ensures the need of the family is identified. All cases from MASH requiring a **CAF (Early Help Assessment)** are discussed with the families consent at the hub 0-19 panels where a lead professional and a range of help is identified.

In house services are provided through our 0-19 hub teams (pilot currently) that includes:

- **Common Assessment Framework** The CAF brings together managers from all key partner agencies working with children and families in Barnet to ensure that early help using the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is working effectively
- **Family Resilience** - works intensively with families with multiple needs;
- **Children's Centres**- provide a variety of advice and support for parents and carers. Their services are available to support families with children under 5 (from pregnancy to when the child goes into reception class at primary school).
- **Childcare**: The Early Years Vulnerable Families Offer entitles all children aged three and four to 15 hours per week of Free Early Education (FEE). Some two year olds are eligible to access up to 15 hours per week for FEE. The Early Years Vulnerable Children funding provides vulnerable children aged 6 months to five years with a funded place within a childcare setting.
- **The Targeted Youth Service**- provides positive activities and targeted youth workers
- **The Safer Families project**- is an early help project which aims to identify children and families where domestic abuse and conflict is a feature of family life but, does not reach the threshold for social care intervention.

Commissioned Services

- Short breaks for Disabled children
- Community focus art programmes
- Barnet Mencap
- Parenting programmes from commUNITY Barnet
- Family Group conference
- Women's support group and play therapy
- Perinatal from home start.

[Full list of services.](#)

Key partner agencies

Schools

Schools play an active role in Early Help, working with children and young people on a daily basis to identify problems early and to intervene in order to improve both learning and wellbeing outcomes for the child.

Health

Health professionals including GPs, health visitors, midwives, sexual health and mental health practitioners are in a good position to identify issues which families or individuals may not be

disclosing, especially in the Violence Against Women and Girls arena (domestic abuse; FGM; honour based violence, sexual exploitation).

Housing

Housing providers can be well placed to identify difficulties with anti-social behaviour, and even challenges like domestic violence. Sharing information and data when they spot families who are experiencing difficulties, playing a central role in coordinated assessments, and 'team around the family' responses, or even being the lead agency in these arrangements, can help ensure that families' housing and far wider needs are addressed promptly and effectively.

Police

We work in partnership with the police to intervene early with young people to reduce the involvement of children and young people in crime and anti-social behaviour and reduce the number of young people at risk of gang activity.

Voluntary and community sector (VCS)

Voluntary and community organisations such as the voluntary youth sector often work with young people from positions of trust and can play an important role in identifying issues that individuals may not be disclosing to other partners. Increasing the contribution of the local VCS to the overall performance of services for children and families in Barnet is a priority.

A directory highlighting the main early help services provided across Barnet is included in Annex A.

6. MEASURING SUCCESS

How will we know if our Early Help is effective?

Effective measurement is a core principle of our approach. A partnership dashboard has been developed to help to answer the question are we making a positive difference to children, young people and families in Barnet. The areas monitored are:

- Common Assessment Framework
- Young Careers
- Missing Children
- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Troubled families turned around (Family First in Barnet)
- Youth Service
- Early Education
- Education and NEET
- Housing
- Health including mental health, immunisation, oral health, obesity
- Substance misuse and alcohol
- Carers
- Outcomes of commissioned services.

Finally, to assess the extent to which our strategy is fully embedded, and the strength of partnership, we will on an annual basis measure ourselves against the Early Intervention and Prevention Maturity Matrix. This matrix outlines the characteristics of organisations at different stages in the maturity of their Early Help provision, ranging from 'Basic Level' through to 'Maturity'. The criteria are:

- **Planning** – Money mostly spent where there is evidence it can be used effectively.
- **Delivering** – Consistent approach to assessing and working with families across multiple agencies.

- **Evaluating** – All services are being monitored and their success measured.
- Everyone works to the same goals.
- **Leading** – A partnership actively owns the Early Help plan.
- It is clear who is in charge of delivering which bits of the plan.
- Everyone talks about Early Help with the same understanding.
- **Family focus** – Children and families are often involved in deciding how services are designed and run.

7. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Governance Arrangements

The strategy will be overseen by: **Barnet's Local Children's Partnership** and updates will be provided to the Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding committee.

The operational governance of the strategy will be overseen by the 0-19 Early Help steering group