

# Family Well Being Strategy 2022 – 2024



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## 1. Introduction

The London Borough of Bexley and partners have developed the Family Well Being Service to help families before their difficulties escalate. Family Well Being keyworkers support children who are living with domestic violence, the mental ill health of a parent or carer, parental drug or alcohol misuse or the threat of or actual exclusion from school. Since 2018 the service has added a third team and is now able to support families where there is a concern relating to physical chastisement which has arisen due to the changes in the demographics of Bexley with a new community of primarily black African families. The family wellbeing service, whilst being accessible only with parental consent, is closely aligned to children's centres where help and support is available from universal and targeted Tier Two levels of support in the community.

The Family Well Being service works with families where one or more of the following difficulties are present:

- Families affected by domestic abuse
- Families living with drug and alcohol misuse
- Working with parents or carers with mental ill health that may impact on their ability to parent
- Families where a child or children are at risk of or have already been excluded from school.
- Parents with learning needs that may impact on their ability to parent
- Families where there may be early signs of low level neglect.
- Families where Physical Chastisement has been raised as a concern

## 2. National Drivers

Working Together to Safeguard Children guidance updated in 2018 states that providing early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later. Early Help means providing support as soon as a difficulty emerges, at any point in a child's life, from the foundation years through to the teenage years. Early help can prevent further difficulties arising, for example, if it is provided as part of a support plan where a child has returned home to their family from Care. Effective early help relies upon local agencies working together to identify children and families who would benefit from early help; undertake an assessment of the need for early help; and provide Tier Three level of support services to address the assessed needs of a child and their family which focuses on activity to significantly improve the outcomes for the child.

## 3. Local Drivers

Our early help offer is delivered through our Family Wellbeing Service. It is a Tier 3 service meaning that families will benefit from some early intensive support to prevent them from requiring a very specialist Tier 4 social work service. Our service priorities were designed collaboratively with the voluntary sector using a wide range of data around key issues and areas of need within the families we were working with, such as prevalence and levels of domestic abuse in the borough, our levels of exclusions and how many children and young people were living in households where parental mental ill health and drug and alcohol abuse exist. This led us to develop the new Family Wellbeing Service priorities, which have been in place since 2016. This fits with the overarching vision and values for children's services.

### 3.1 Our Vision and Values for helping families early

*Our Vision for children's Services is:*

*We will try to help families at the **earliest opportunity**, especially if there are children living with **violence, the mental ill health of a parent or carer, the risk of or actual school exclusion or drug and alcohol abuse** by an adult or carer in the household.*

*Our Values for Children's Services are that:*

*We will be **reliable and interested in the quality and effectiveness of our work**. We will make sure everyone understands what we are doing, why we are doing it and the plans we are making. We will always ask for **feedback**, and **we will learn** how to improve what we do and how we do it.*





### 3.2 The Bexley Corporate Vision

**Bexley Corporate Plan for 2017 – 2025; *Shaping our Future Together*** was adopted by the Council in November 2017 and set out the following vision for helping families early.

#### ***Bexley Corporate Plan - Working early with families***

We will help families at the earliest opportunity, especially if there are children living with violence, the mental ill health of a parent or carer, the risk of or actual school exclusion or drug and alcohol abuse by an adult or carer in the household.

We will know we have achieved this when we see the following changes:

1. Families identify the things they want to change and we give them the support they need to change.
2. There is a good range of preventative services offered in the community by the local authority and its partners to help families before they need a specialist or intensive service.
3. Our schools, children's centres and early years providers are engaged with and supporting our offers of early help.
4. Families find their own enduring solutions. Once improvements happen, our services reduce or end so that we do not create dependence on our services.
5. We help families make connections with their local community and naturally connected networks so that they have help to keep their children safe and well.



### 3.3 Improvement in Children's Services

Family Well Being is (under the heading of prevention) one of the eight priorities in the Improvement Plan for Children's Services. This includes the following priority areas of work:

#### ***Helping early***

Priority aim: supporting families to find solutions to their difficulties so that their well-being improves and the need for specialist services is avoided.

#### ***Key priorities:***

1. Family Well Being
2. Keeping families together – how staying together and think family teams support diversion from care and reunification
3. "Good conversations" - a shared multi-agency approach to supporting families and children in Bexley.

#### 4. Our aspirations for Family Well Being

- **Leadership:** All agencies in Bexley share and understand the vision for Family Well Being in Bexley because it is regularly communicated and discussed. Strong relationships drive focus and ambition for helping families early.



- **Workforce development:** Family Keyworkers are sufficiently skilled and well supported to engage and support children and families, on a consensual basis. They understand and safely identify with their managers when a more or less specialist response is needed.



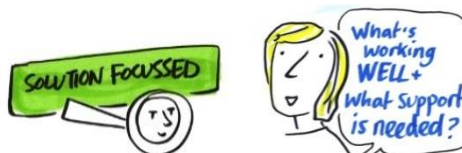
- **Effective Support:** We work together to ensure children and families get the right help at the right time. But we only do this alongside and with the permission of families.



- **Needing less help or more help from our services:** Children and families may need more or less help at different times, we understand this and work together to provide the right support that children and families need.



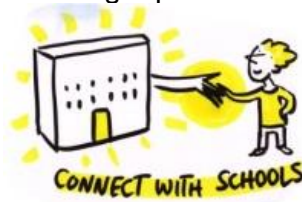
- **Signs of Wellbeing:** We use Signs of Wellbeing to create a common conversation for professionals, to help children and families recognise what they do well and jointly find solutions on what they want to improve.



- **Keeping Families Together:** We undertake well-being assessments and plans to enable children and families to stay and work together, where it is in their best interest.



- **Helping children and young people to thrive:** We will support children and families to find the right educational environment that meets their needs, when this has been a struggle for them and we will be intensely interested in helping them to get back to achieving expected levels of progress.





## 5. What has the service achieved in the last strategic period?

The Family Wellbeing criteria were well established across the partnership when first launched. However, with significant changes in staff and structures across the partnerships, in 2019 we embarked on re-launching our criteria by attending key events for partners and have had a timetable in place for 2020 to embed this. In 2019, we reviewed the referral pathway in consultation with the team and service users, making slight alterations to our timescales that has allowed us to work with our children and families on providing clearer and more collaborative assessments and wellbeing plans. In 2019 Bexley adopted the Signs Of Safety Children's Information System of Liquid Logic which has included the Early Help Module and provides us with improved data performance together with better assessment and plan formats for our families.

The transfer process between Family Wellbeing and Children's Social Care continues to work well and we have put in place a regular bi-monthly meeting with Service Managers in Children's Social Care which ensures good relationships, reviews the process and therefore, appropriate ensures appropriate levels of support for our families without drift and delay.

Our audits in 2019-evidenced good examples of skilful solution focussed direct work with families, staff who are motivated and passionate about helping families and positive feedback from children, families and our partner agencies. It also identified what we could do better in providing more informative chronologies which identified the impact on our families and their children.

In September 2019 the responsibility for Children Centres transferred from Education to Children's Social Care and they are now managed by the Family Wellbeing Service Manager. In September 2020 the new Children Centre project was launched with close working in early identification and early help together with Family Wellbeing and Health/Education colleagues focussing on the first 1001 days of a child's life. We are now in the position to review both our Family Wellbeing and Children's Centre offer and look to the future of how we structure our early years and preventative services to work more closely together as part of a Family Hub model aligning with the Children Social Care review in Early Help.



## 6. Our Service development priorities

- Reconfiguration of the family wellbeing counsellors' support and intervention for 3-6 months to double capacity in working with children and young people due to the impact of COVID on the emotional wellbeing of the children and families in Bexley.
- Supporting children and young people with their families regarding reintegration into education/community groups to prevent isolation and prevent decline in mental health difficulties by group work and direct work with children/young people and their parents.
- Development of early identification and intervention with regards to children and young people 11+ who are at risk of CSE and going missing by having a dedicated team who can respond in partnership with health and education to prevent children/young people being exploited and becoming looked after.
- Developing actions and recommendations from the 2021 race and equality work undertaken regarding service offer and early withdrawal of consent from families who are from an ethnic minority. Quarterly parental engagement meetings will be undertaken to understand and develop the guidance in the offer as well as coproducing leaflets and information with a core group of parents identified
- Developing and improving through range of regular engagements, with schools, GP's, public health colleagues & children's centres

- To increase engagement with the community and understand what they want and need, working with multi-agency partners to support housing need, employment and mental health services
- To consider the opportunities for closer alignment with Education partners and other existing preventative & early assessment interventions
- To improve the throughput of families, so that we visit, assess & make an initial plan within the first 25 days, reviewing monthly and withdrawing at 3 or 6 months, whichever is appropriate
- To continuously review and improve the quality of our well-being practice, aligning it with Signs of Safety and being clear with families how they can work together to improve their children's experiences.
- To complete a review of Family Wellbeing and Children Centre Services looking towards the future for early help and preventative support for our families and their children.



## 7. Accountability

### Leadership and governance of our effectiveness:

1. The Children's Social Care Senior Leadership Team oversee the progress with implementation of the priorities included in the Council's corporate plan. This is reported quarterly to the Corporate Leadership Team and to Members.
2. The Children and Young People's Improvement Partnership meets 4 times per year. Two meetings are a partnership forum and two are held to scrutinise progress internally with Senior Members and Officers against the Children's Services Improvement Plan.
3. People Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive an update on each of the eight improvement priority areas as part of the Children's Services update each quarter.
4. Operational performance and impact are monitored through monthly service manager reports to senior managers and an internal performance review every 10 weeks that highlights impact and challenges based on operational performance and quality assurance information.
5. Regular audits of practice that are moderated and form a part of regular performance reporting. We aim to undertake 4 themed audits per annum in addition to the monthly collaborative audits undertaken as part of the Children Social Care Quality Assurance Audit programme.

Threshold for Effective Support as contained in: [The Bexley Effective Support Strategy](#)

