



North West Children's Improvement Programme
Integrated Early Help Strategy

ADCS
Leading Children's Services

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Foreword

This strategy has been developed and approved by the North West Association of Directors of Children's Services in response to the need outlined in both national and local policy to ensure delivery on a consistent basis. It is a key element of our overall vision to improve outcomes for families, children and young people in the North West Region and enable them to achieve their full potential.

Implementation of Effective Early Help strategies will contribute to meeting the targets for improvement in both local and national frameworks including key priorities of:

- Narrowing the Gap
- Improving Readiness for School
- Young People's Lifestyle Choices
- Skills Improvement
- Workforce Development and Integrated Practice

This is also consistent with Health and Wellbeing Strategic Frameworks.

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The strategy requires all agencies working with children and young people and their families to:

- Provide leadership and direction to improve outcomes for children and young people
- Lead integrated service delivery and effective use of resources
- Agree, monitor and evaluate a strategic plan to drive forward the work that the partners deliver together
- Hold each other to account for the actions agreed

Introduction

- The strategy
 - This strategy has been approved by the Directors of Children's Services from the North West Children's Improvement Board Best Practice Network Number 1. It is recommended for use across the North West Region.
- Scope of the strategy
 - The strategy covers the key principles for an integrated multi-agency approach to the development and implementation of an effective Early Help Strategy. Effective Early Help requires a whole family approach and encompasses all stakeholders working with children young people and families. This includes Health, Police, Education, Children's Social Care, Voluntary and Community organisations and the wider public.
 - The strategy acknowledges that agencies and localities will be addressing their own distinct needs, and meeting a range of KPI's against a variety of policy drivers and aims to provide an umbrella framework of key principles that can be applied across all agendas.
- The timescale of the strategy
 - The strategy will be launched at a learning event in March 2013 which will disseminate the key principles and share current and emerging best practice. A critical element of implementation and evaluation of Early Help Strategies is the acknowledgement that this is a long term process. Whilst some interventions may be brief, the effectiveness may be longer lasting and the impact may only be clear in the future.

The development process

- The strategy was developed by a steering group commissioned by the Association of Directors of Children's Service Best Practice Network. The group was comprised of professionals from a range of stakeholders and brought a wide range of experience and expertise to the development of the project. **Full membership can be found in Appendix 3.**

Executive Summary

The Association of Directors of Children's Services and the Children's Improvement Board support Munro's findings and recommendations in relation to the use of Early Help as opposed to Early Intervention and agree with the following statement:

"The case for preventative and early help services is clear, both in the sense of offering help to children and families before any problems are apparent and in providing help when low level problems emerge. From the perspective of a child or young person, it is clearly better if they receive help before they have any, or only minor, adverse experiences."

We believe that investment in Early Help not only improves outcomes for children and families but provides value for money at a time when resources are subject to continuous scrutiny and challenge. This approach should be a key element of local Invest to Save strategies.

Our Strategy defines what we mean by Early Help and articulates the principles that underpin the future development and delivery of services. The Strategy sets out the ACDS ambition for the development of Early Help services.

The Strategy takes into account national and local policy drivers and includes our ambitious goal to ensure all our children are safe, aspire and achieve their full potential, regardless of the circumstances in which they are born.

Engagement with the strategy by all sectors will require some culture and operational changes but by doing so, and actively working to deliver the outcomes, we believe that we will positively change the compact between the community and the public sector in ways which build and strengthen community resilience leading to the release of a wealth of social capacity.

We recognise we are at the beginning of this journey and this strategy is aspirational but we are building on solid foundations established through the success of existing early intervention work. This strategy brings all current strands of work together including the 'troubled families' programme and the Think Family early intervention strategies. Our ambition is for families who require early help to be supported in their communities without the need for statutory agencies to be involved.



Deborah Brownlee,
Corporate Director, Children and Young People's Service
Trafford Council

National Context


Many local authorities are operating within a climate of unprecedented challenge for the public and voluntary sector as demand for specialist services rapidly increases against a backdrop of dramatically reducing resources. For some families (nationally estimated at 30% of the population), difficulties arise which, if addressed early enough, can be prevented from escalating into costly statutory service intervention. If Early Help is not offered, this can in the worst cases result in children's social and emotional development being irreparably impaired and family breakdown. If effective, Early Help empowers families to regain control of their circumstances and help transform the lives of vulnerable children without state support and have a secondary, though equally important, positive effect on cost effectiveness.

The central importance of early intervention in enabling children and adults to reach their full potential has been set out in a number of government reports published nationally to improve our understanding and service responses when working with children and families.

The key documents which form the basis for our strategy are:

The Munro Review of Child Protection Final Report - A Child Centred System May 2011

Professor Eileen Munro



"The foundations for virtually every aspect of human development – physical, intellectual and emotional are laid in early childhood. What happens during those early years, starting in the womb, has lifelong effects on many aspects of health and well being; from obesity, heart disease and mental health, to educational and economic achievement..... Later interventions, although important, are considerably less effective if they have not had good early foundations"

Fair Society, Healthy Lives: 2010. - The Marmot Review

The Foundation Years:

Preventing poor children becoming poor adults. 2010.

Frank Field MP

"We have found overwhelming evidence that children's life chances are most heavily predicated on their development in the first five years of life. It is family background, parental education, good parenting and the opportunities for learning and development in those crucial years that together matter more to children than money, in determining whether their potential is realised in adult life".

Tickell Review: The Early Years: Foundations for life, health and learning. 2011

The review makes 46 recommendations under the headings:

- Strong foundations for all children
- An inclusive, accessible and flexible Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)
- Equipped for life, ready for school
 - Keeping children safe, and
 - A professional, well supported workforce

"I recommend that future expansion of early intervention programmes should favour those which combine strong evidence bases with the impact of crucial stages in the development of social and emotional bedrock in children and the present network of children's centres should use such approaches to identify and meet the needs of vulnerable children and families"

Graham Allen MP. Early Intervention: The Next Steps. January 2011

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The government's strategy on social justice encapsulates the findings from the different reviews of the child protection system¹, early years² and poverty³ and outlines that social justice is based upon two principles:

- Prevention – interventions designed to stop children and families falling into difficult circumstances; and
- Second Chance Society – access to support and tools for families to help them transform their lives once in difficult circumstances.

Health drivers and delivery are underpinned by NICE guidance and meeting the standards of the Care Quality Commission framework

In addition to these, links to other relevant national documents and reviews can be found in **Appendix 2.**

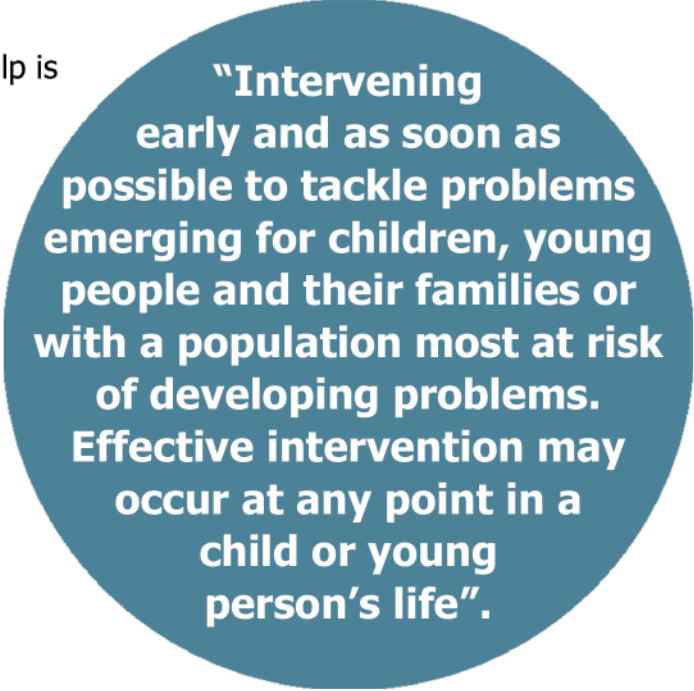
¹ Munro (May 2011) ²Tickell (March 2011) ³Field (December 2010)

What Does Early Help Mean?

Defining Early Help is a challenge. There are many excellent programmes which are referred to as being Early Help; however these often focus on Early Years or are Intensive Early Intervention programmes. Other emergent programmes such as Troubled Families are often referred to as Early Help, although such programmes provide intensive interventions to families who have reached thresholds which define them as troubled, an effective Early Help strategy will prevent escalation and ensure fewer families require this type of costly intervention.

Eileen Munro's report uses the terminology of 'early help' which many people find preferable to "early intervention and prevention" in the sense that "early help" alludes to a process within which children, young people and families are equal partners in the process and emphasises more of doing **with** rather than doing **to**.

We consider the most useful definition of early help is the one proposed by the C4EO expert group:



"Intervening early and as soon as possible to tackle problems emerging for children, young people and their families or with a population most at risk of developing problems. Effective intervention may occur at any point in a child or young person's life".

This definition includes both interventions early in life (with young children, including prenatal interventions) and interventions early in the development of a problem (with children or young people of any age). It includes universal interventions that are offered to an entire population to prevent problems developing, and targeted interventions that are offered to particular children, young people and families with existing risk factors, vulnerabilities or acknowledged additional needs in order to protect them from developing problems or reduce the severity of problems that have started to emerge.

This definition seems to reflect what we are hoping to achieve with this strategy and we are therefore recommending authorities adopt this approach to the development and implementation of their local Early Help Strategies.

What will good look like?

Where a fully integrated Early Help Strategy investing in prevention and self-determination focussing on the causes rather than the symptoms of dysfunction is implemented, we believe that this will result in a reduction in the demand on specialist services, therefore reducing costs in the long-term. The strategy will identify, build and release the necessary social capital and resilience within communities to improve outcomes for children, young people and families using their own resources supplemented by access to universal services.

Early Help Strategies if well planned, implemented and performance managed by all stakeholders will be embedded in local planning cycles and linked to the 5 common 'golden threads' of:

- The best start in life
- Language for life
- Engaging parents
- Smarter working
- Knowledge is power

Implementation of the principles of working outlined in this strategy will ensure that there is a strong recognition of the role of wider partnerships and communities in contributing to ensuring the safety and well-being of all families, children and young people.

Ownership Governance & Accountability

The strategy has been developed at a time when the public sector is undergoing a period of transformational change and there is a challenge for the leadership of all sectors including the wider community to manage societal expectations, create a new reality and secure deep cultural and adaptive change.

The strategy incorporates the key principles for an integrated constructed approach to the development and implementation of an effective Early Help Strategy. We believe delivering Early Help in order to keep families, children and young people safe is not a single agency responsibility and requires a whole family approach owned by all stakeholders working with children, young people and families. This includes Health, Police, Probation, Schools/Education, Children's Social Care, Adult Services, Housing, Voluntary and Community organisations and the wider public. We therefore recommend that ownership and management of the strategy rests with existing local mechanisms which capture the whole community. This may be local Children's Trust's, Health and Well Being Boards or Strategic Partnerships which allows for performance to be managed against an integrated performance system designed to measure improved outcomes for children, young people and their families through an outcomes based accountability framework. Quality Assurance and challenge should always be provided via the Local Children's Safeguarding Board.

The current Ofsted Framework for the inspection of local authority arrangements for the protection of children (April 2012) makes it clear that Early Help and Intervention is part of effective safeguarding processes and local strategies should ensure that all agencies are aware of their responsibilities.

Child protection does not begin at the point of referral to children's social care. Early identification and early help are firmly within the scope of the inspection of child protection services. A key part of the inspection framework will be considering the effectiveness of these services in identifying children and young people who may be at risk, and the degree to which agencies work together to identify problems and offer effective help early, without the need for a formal referral to social care.

Individual agencies will be responsible for meeting their own performance management arrangements which should incorporate targets for delivering the wider strategy and meeting shared KPIs and outcomes. This strategy provides an overarching suite of KPIs and includes a set of key principles which can be applied across all agendas and be mapped onto individual performance management frameworks.

In the development and implementation of their individual Early Help Strategy each area should examine their linkages to the plans and priorities of their key existing strategies and plans. These would include, but are not exclusive to:

- Local safeguarding procedures and implementation
- Child and family poverty strategy
- Local Children's Trust and Partnership Plans
- Adult, Child and Maternal Mental Health
- Public Health and Prevention
- Regeneration and Housing
- Crime and Disorder

Local Early Help strategies should include utilising existing processes for referral and assessment of need, CAF processes and an assessment against Continuum of Need structures with a shared understanding across agencies of the thresholds and intervention levels.

Key principles

Early Help Strategies are predicated on, and require full commitment to multi-agency working with consistency of approach, application of thresholds and pooling of resources. They need multi agency and community ownership with strong beneficiary participation which means that they should:

- Invest in strategies that develop the emotional intelligence and capacity of local communities
- Devolve real responsibility, leadership and authority to 'users', and encourage self-organisation rather than direction from above
- Offer participants a range of incentives which help to embed the key elements of reciprocity and mutuality

To achieve, this requires a change in culture that:

- Recognises people as assets and builds on existing capability
- Promotes mutuality and reciprocity
- Blurs distinctions between professionals and users
- Focuses on facilitating rather than delivering

The responsibility for creating the environment where Early Help strategies can flourish and become effective lies with all partners and the wider community. The incentives to change rest not only with the local authorities where strong leadership and direction has a role in setting out priorities and incentives which will enable services which deliver positive outcomes across the community. It is vitally important to engage with individuals, families, communities, businesses, voluntary sector, organisations and charitable foundations. It is in the effective identification and utilisation of their potential, their human capital, their personal time as well as their financial assets that we can build sustainable social capital which has a positive impact on community wellbeing.

Delivering an effective local Early Help strategy

There are already excellent examples of developing strategies and emerging good practice across the North West Region and we would encourage all areas to share experiences in order to avoid duplication and achieve economies of scale.

This strategy acknowledges that each local area will design and deliver an individual Early Help strategy and offer in response to defined local needs and recommends operational delivery be underpinned by the following principles:

- The overall objective of early help is to address family needs to the point where their needs can best be met from within universal services
- Wherever possible, children, young people and their families are able to live 'ordinary lives'
- A single multiagency assessment, planning and review process is provided and delivered in partnership with children, young people and families
- The uniqueness of children, young people and families is valued and provided for.
- Service delivery is holistic, coordinated and seamless
- Continuity of care is maintained through different stages of a child's life and through their preparation for adulthood
- Children and young people's learning and development are monitored and promoted
- Children, young people and families are able to make informed choices
- Families are central to defining and addressing the problems that they face and are key partners in the process
- Children, families and young people are involved in shaping, developing and evaluating the services they use
- Multiagency working practices and systems are integrated
- Children, young people and families can be confident that the people working with them have the appropriate training, skills, knowledge and experience

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In order to achieve these objectives all agencies will take responsibility for fostering a shared inter-agency culture that values:

- The identification and taking of early help opportunities with families
- The contributions of all professional staff, volunteers and family members
- Positive challenge and holding each other to account for outcomes for families
- Working to overcome systemic barriers to achieving better outcomes
- Support time for shared learning and ensuring that what we do is based on good evidence

Additionally

- Staff need to be familiar with people and locations, and understand the context
- Staff training is key to the success of early intervention; professionals should have underpinning knowledge of interventions
- Programmes should be evidence-based; new programmes should evaluate effectiveness on outcomes
- Professionals should share expertise
- Professionals should share a common language
- All agencies should work to common data sets

In addition, all services should agree and actively promote the following multi-agency principles of Early Help to guide and support all services delivered:

- All agencies recognise, in order to be able to intervene early, that services need to be available across the levels of need and age range
- All agencies working with children and families are committed to early help. This means that there are no wrong front doors and all agencies are committed to addressing the needs of families whether that need falls within their immediate area of professional expertise or not
- For all children and families, agencies are committed to identifying children's and family's unmet needs and identifying early low level problems emerging in children and families. This is manifested by a commitment from agencies to support their frontline staff taking a lead in meeting families' needs and a willingness to support the multi-agency processes once families requiring early help are identified by other agencies
- Agencies are committed to addressing unmet needs and low level problems at the lowest levels of the continuum of need and ideally at the universal and targeted service level with effective interventions which prevent escalation into social care
- Where unmet needs and low level problems involve two or more agencies, all agencies are committed to undertaking an assessment using the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) at the first point of service contact, irrespective of the range of needs immediately falling in their professional expertise
- In many instances early help is provided by the agency identifying the need although when that agency feels it needs support from another agency or agencies then mechanisms exist to broker this support
- Each agency is committed to contributing to single and multi-agency processes once children and families are identified for early help provision
- All agencies acknowledge that need and risk co-exist and that risk ranges from significant to low-level; agencies are committed to reduce risk within families, ideally at the lowest levels of the continuum before the risk reaches the 'significant' harm level
- The voice of the family and crucially of the child (based on age appropriateness) whose development, wellbeing and welfare will be affected by the unmet needs and problems, must be sought at all stages of any early help offer
- Agencies separately and collectively will work to overcome systemic barriers so that the aim of any service provided will be to improve a child's wellbeing and improve their every child matters outcome areas
- Services will be integrated where possible providing escalation where need and risk increase, and step-down services to sustain improvements where risk and need decrease; services must ensure pathways are smooth and uninterrupted for children and families
- Agencies will continuously review and evaluate services, including with their users, to ensure they meet needs and address problems effectively; where services fail to improve outcomes, agencies are committed to learning and improving services

- Agencies will work within the legal framework of the Equality Act 2010 and will ensure that all services are delivered in a way which:

**Represents,
serves and
employs people
as equals**

**Values
the diversity
of their
contributions and
aspirations**

**No matter
who they are
or what their
circumstances
are**

National Good Practice

There are many national examples of well-structured Early Help strategies - examples can be found on the C4EO website <http://www.c4eo.org.uk>.

The Early Help agenda requires long term evaluation to validate significant change as a result the current information base is fluid with positive additions being made on a regular basis.

We recommend that each local area should seek to examine strategies from other areas with similar profiles as they develop their own strategy bespoke to their local needs.

Local Good practice

Good practice is also emerging from across the North West region and examples from Salford and Stockport are available to view on the C4EO website <http://www.c4eo.org.uk>. Exemplars are added regularly, and alongside Salford and Stockport, we have identified the following as indicators of positive direction of travel:

Trafford Children's Centres - Early Home Learning Project

This project developed the early home learning environment devising an early intervention programme which involves direct work in family homes with parents and their children for a period of no more than twelve weeks.

The starting point was the acknowledgement that parents are children's first educators and that in order to meet children's centre priorities we needed to identify families whose children were at risk of low achievement.

The overarching aim of the programme was to raise parental awareness that certain activities are crucial and timely intervention can give a child the best start. The programme involved home visits and supported visits to libraries. As a result of the programme there is case study evidence to show that parental awareness of their child's development has improved. They spend more time on crucial activities and parents have made some significant changes that have the potential to improve outcomes for their child, for example:

- Providing daily activities such as reading stories and looking at books, singing nursery rhymes and songs, opportunities to make, draw and count
- Spending time on the floor each day playing and interacting together
- Joining the local library and visiting regularly
- Playing outdoors and visiting the local park regularly
- Visiting places of interest in the community
- Accessing two year old funding
- Accessing universal services; for example, stay & play, toddler gym
- Taking the first steps towards accessing adult learning

Blackburn with Darwen Early Help Programme

The programme works within the community empowering families to self-identify and deliver their own family plan to remove obstacles to realising their potential.

Families receive support from an advocate to achieve positive changes through Early Help. This family has agreed to share their experience.

The family comprises:

Mother 43 years
Child A 18 years
Child B 17 years
Child C 5 years

They were nominated for Early Help as a result of:

- A history of social care involvement due to domestic abuse and poor home conditions
- Child B's school identified concerns re: poor home conditions and poor school attendance
- Parenting issues, behavioural concerns with older boys
- Mum has a history of depression, low self esteem and confidence

As a result of the Early Help Programme, a family plan was developed which saw:

- Mum attending therapeutic group and progressing onto individual 1-1 counselling
- Mum addressing depression, confidence and self esteem
- Mum addressing school attendance for child B
- Family wanting to spend more time together as a family
- Mum seeking further training/employment
- Family as a whole addressing home conditions with support from their advocate

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The outcome is:

- All children are attending school and college making excellent progress
- Family relationships have improved which has had a positive effect on all family members as they spend more time together as a family
- No longer behavioural problems with older boys, mum now feels confident to manage their behaviour
- Mum, with support from her advocate and the older boys, has made improvements to the home conditions
- Mum has gone on to further education and training, she has accessed English and Maths courses within the children centres and is now attending a catering course and is going onto a higher level catering course in September
- Mum has joined a gym and is adopting a healthier lifestyle for herself and her children
- Following the Early Help Therapeutic group, counselling and further training has ensured mum's confidence and self-esteem has improved to the extent where she has had the confidence to take part in focus groups as part of Ofsted inspections and has spoken out individually to inspectors and takes part in research and evaluation interviews in respect of Early Help
- The increase in Mums confidence and self-esteem has improved and has had a positive effect on the whole family and she reports this process and the support she has received has changed her life and those of her children

The key to the successful outcome is that the family has made changes at their own pace in accordance with their own plan when they are ready to do so. They are currently sustaining these changes.

Developing a Local Strategy

This document sets out the principles which should underpin any Local Strategy. In local areas these need to be turned into operationally effective systems which can be robustly performance managed.

Many areas across the region are well on the way to developing effective operational models under challenging fiscal circumstances.

The starting point for most areas has been in their assessment of current situations - this has been the approach taken in the Stockport Borough whilst Wirral have used the Peer Challenge process to identify gaps and implementation principles. Key to this process in Wirral was to understand the need for a clear vision owned by all partners of the common goal before commencing structural and operational planning.

Appendix 1 lists Key questions which can be used as a starting point for Resource Mapping and provides guidelines for an Early Help Strategy Planning Framework.

Evidence of Impact

Early help strategies are acknowledged as a long term prevention investment to save models which will require time to generate hard evidenced fiscal savings. However, many areas are already reporting progress against softer outcomes including cultural change, for example

Sheffield City Council developed an Early Help Model in 2008 and they are now able to report evidence based outcomes

The Strategy was implemented as a result of identifying that of around 120,000 children and young people between the ages of 0-19 in Sheffield (23.3% of the total population), it was estimated that 35,000 of these will at some point in their lives need some form of additional support. The challenge was to provide support so that every child achieves their potential, no matter what the barriers may be. To do so, the City agreed it must work in new and effective ways across services, and prevention and intervention services were developed for this reason.

Successful early identification of children and young people with additional needs reduces the numbers of children who need additional support and which may escalate into expensive targeted and treatment services.

As a result of an internal review, three areas of priority for future development were identified:

- defining the service delivery model for children, young people and families
- defining the governance and partnership model that supports community engagement
- developing and implementing a performance management framework that assesses impact

Out of this, the Prevention and Early Intervention Project (2009-2010) provided a defined model for delivering multi-agency front line services and packages of support to children and families in local communities. The model and its associated structures for delivery has embedded new ways of working that have increased early identification of potential risk and developed a system for assessment, planning, implementation and review.

The model has become known as the Multi Agency Allocation Meetings (MAAM) process. This is a framework of shared principles based on the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) which creates consistency in approach with universal and partner agencies delivering services in conjunction with Local Authority and Health Services.

The MAAMs model was developed in collaboration with a focus group of headteachers, health representatives and representatives from Social Care. They were introduced by Multi Agency Support Teams (MAST) in 2009 with the aim of co-ordinating and performance managing integrated working throughout the City.

Sheffield have evaluated the project against national key performance indicators and introduced local performance indicators to monitor outputs from the project. They have also conducted an evaluation of customer satisfaction with the services they received.

Customers were asked what difference they thought the team had made to their child. Citywide, 75% of customers thought that MAST services had made 'some' to 'lots' of difference in a positive way to their child.

Evidencing Financial Impact

Early Help strategies are long term programmes and financial impact may take several years to be fully quantified. The costings section of the C4EO website provides a wide spectrum of tools and templates to assess the financial impact of services. One example of which is given below:

	How Benefit is Delivered	Cost of Delivery	Benefit Category	Immediate Benefit £	Evidence	Result
Programme Outcomes for the Community	Home Visits	Cost A	Health	Reduced Poverty	Surveys	What does evidence tell us?
	Parental Support	Cost B	Education	Better Health	Statistics	Does it meet the objective?
	Support Groups	Cost C		Improved Education	Research	
	Teaching	Etc	Community Resilience	Mental Health Benefits	Reports	Lifetime Benefits
	Etc.		Social Care	Etc.	Etc.	
			Others			
			Total Cost		Financial/Non Financial Benefits	

Robust performance management is essential to effective implementation and the case audit approach used by Halton Borough Council has been identified as good practice by Ofsted. Details can be accessed at <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/good-practice-resource-improving-quality-of-practice-through-case-audit-halton-borough-council>

Strategic Outcomes and Measures of Success

Each authority should link the Early Help strategy to Local Strategic Plans priorities from JSNA and those set by Health and Wellbeing Boards and aim to improve the outcomes for children, young people and their families.

They should consider an outcomes based framework of performance management which will give a clear indication of how the implementation of multi agency joined up working to provide effective, timely and appropriate early help has:

- Improved outcomes for children, young people and families
- Contributed to the achievement of key performance indicators across all agencies
- Made a financial impact

The identification of a clear common goal will inform the key indicators for measurement of the effectiveness of the strategy. In line with the smarter working and knowledge threads, effective identification of those who would benefit most will need to occur. National indicators and information from other LA's would suggest that the following groups would be amongst the target populations for early intervention services. However, children and families with additional needs are often identified through a range of services, which may include those not solely concerned with work with children (e.g. police, housing), confirming the importance of good and effective information sharing.

- children not ready to participate in education by age 4
- children and families experiencing poverty
- children and young people at risk of entering or re-entering care
- teenage parents
- children missing education
- young carers
- children and young people affected by drug or alcohol misuse
- children and young people affected by domestic violence
- children and young people whose families are homeless
- children and young people with disabilities or SEN
- children and young people at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation

Key performance indicators

It is important that indicators which measure success of any early intervention initiatives are established and agreed from the outset. It is equally important that there exists a common framework for data collection and reporting and that all agencies share a common data set and language. Many authorities' strategies report to Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) and in that case, all data and reporting should be undertaken at this level.

- children attending early education programmes (2,3,4 YO Free entitlements)
- reduction in children not "school ready"
- closing the gap data
- REFSP attainment
- early REFSP introduction
- development of integrated health, care and education plans
- speech & language progress (less children referred/more children accessing)
- reduction in children experiencing poverty
- reductions in young people NEET
- parents accessing early support (parenting programmes/family journey)
- reduced CP interventions
- reductions in numbers of children in care
- reductions in children and young people in trouble with the police
- reduced teenage pregnancies
- improved and effective use of CAF's
- work with "stronger families"
- numbers of families overall in a period who have accessed early intervention programmes

Implementing the strategy

This strategy recommends that area strategies are designed around the five “golden threads” of early intervention as defined by C4EO’s practice guide for early intervention. These should form the basis for Local Implementation Plans which include local performance indicators for measuring success and demonstrating impact.

The golden threads are:

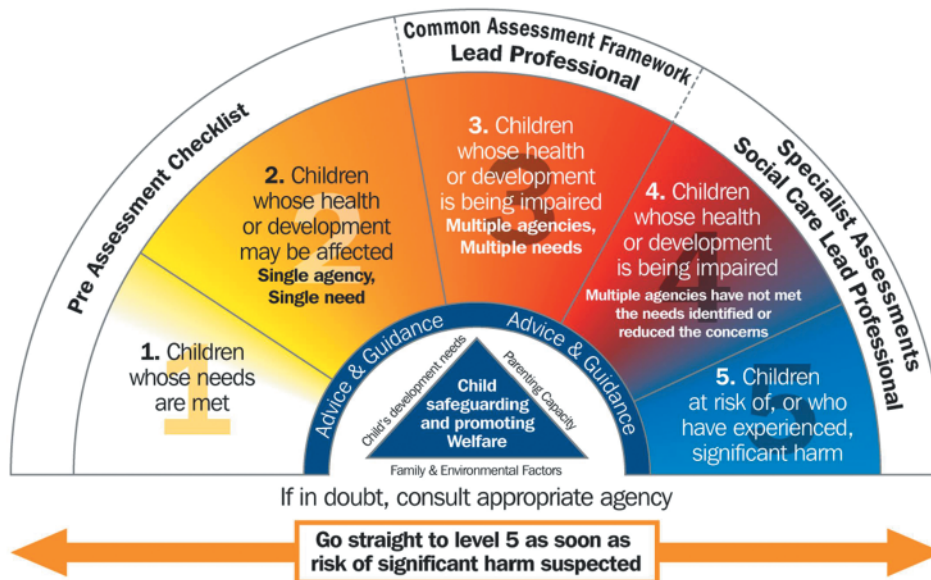
- **The best start in life** - how child development from birth to five is a foundation for a resilient and sustainable local community
- **Language for life** - programmes to challenge the correlation between communication difficulties and low attainment at school entry leading to poor employment prospects, particularly in socially disadvantaged areas
- **Engaging parents** - persuading parents that engaging in their child’s development can make a real and tangible difference to their futures
- **Smarter working** - refocusing the efforts of services towards better, and earlier, identification of vulnerable children and families
- **Knowledge is power** - the effective use and provision of data and management information to identify vulnerable families and measure the impact of services upon them

This is achieved by:

- Improving integrated working and preventing escalation
- Reducing the risk factors that inhibit children reaching their potential
- Targeting resources at the early years to maximise the future life chances of vulnerable children
- Addressing the causes of disadvantage as well as individual need
- Ensuring strategies and plans are jointly owned, delivered and measured
- Ensuring that we are targeting children and their parents, as parents are often the drivers of the issues

Implementation via Local Needs and Response Framework

The strategy recommends that implementation at local level be linked to existing effective mechanisms. Local Authorities will have their own Needs and Response Model which applies to all children and young people from conception to the age of 18 years. It recognises that **all service responses must be directed at preventing vulnerability and meeting the needs identified at the lowest level of intervention. Early recognition, intervention and prevention are essential in order to achieve this.** See diagram example below:



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Effective early help strategies will ensure de-escalation as well as escalation.

The above windshield model is just one example of assessment; local areas may use different models and have more or less threshold levels. The Local Early Help strategy should use existing systems of measurement, however it is critical that all agencies use a single assessment tool and that all staff fully trained in assessment have a common understanding of thresholds

The aim of the Early Help Strategy should be for cases to move back into universal services and sustained community support.

The definition of early intervention detailed in this strategy advocates that early intervention services are aimed at those children and young people at Level 2 (children whose health or development may be affected) and Level 3 (children whose health and development is at increased risk of being affected).

The following principles should underpin practice to ensure that the Child's Journey is at the heart of all interventions and interactions for all agencies:

- Information sharing and ICT should act as an enabler, not a barrier to integrated processes across the continuum of need
- Early Help offer should be well defined, but not separate from other statutory services with a shared focus on the child's journey and the use of a 'step up/step down' and 'tiers of provision' approach
- Clear articulation and expectations of the nature and level of social care involvement where thresholds are not met and after child protection plans are ceased
- Importance of co-ordinated Early Help, CAF/TAC/TAF and Social Care resources at the 'front door' via integration, co-location or ownership of shared thresholds
- Broaden and embed the use of consistent assessment tools including case summaries, risk assessments, history and chronologies across all agencies

Effective, independent review mechanisms for Child in Need cases within social care and into targeted services should already be in place and will offer reassurances re: the management of risk and effectiveness of the early help offer.

Commissioning

Commissioning of services which can deliver an effective early help offer need to be:

Flexible and able to be moved around the community in response to need

Take account of community assets and encourage development and sustainability
increased social capital

- Commissioners should use an outcomes-based commissioning model which specifies the outcomes to be achieved, not merely actions and outputs. They should take account of outcomes across their wider social, environmental and economic objectives and endeavour to maximise value over a range of service areas and ensure that every pound spent creates the best value possible. Children's wellbeing should be factored into the process. (Murphy A Guide to Commissioning Children's Services for Better Outcomes)
- Involve service users, including families' children and young people in the design and delivery of services requires that the tender specifies this activity as a priority. It is important to give service users a role beyond consultation and to provide opportunities for them to act as both the recipient and the provider of services through a reciprocal approach to working. The system of measurement should reflect what really matters to children and young people, as what is measured ultimately determines what gets prioritised, where resources are invested, and what lessons are learned about improving services. (Murphy A Guide to Commissioning Children's Services for Better Outcomes)
- Take into account Social return on Investment (SROI) and ensure that the measurement indicators reflect what matters to families' children and young people, as what is measured ultimately determines what will be prioritised

Evaluation and review

Authorities should ensure that there is clear and widespread consultation in the development of local strategies and implementation plans across all stakeholders including children, families and young people. As part of the consultation process this will establish a clear view of 'What does good, look like?' for each authority.

Independent evaluation may be commissioned and any evidence shared across the Best Practice Network.

Appendix 1

EARLY HELP - Resource Mapping

Understanding what resources and services are currently available, and what might be available in the future to better deliver improved outcomes.

At this stage, securing detailed, good quality information about current activity, the impact of services and the resources required across agencies is crucial to go on to make key judgements such as:

- Which services are well aligned with the needs of the population and which services need to change?
- Whether the quality of services is good enough
- Whether services present good value for money
- Whether there are significant risks of service failure or deterioration

To allow these judgements to be made, information is required which will answer key questions such as:

- What services are currently provided?
- What organisations, and with what constitution, governance and resources provide them?
- How are they differentiated - for instance geographically, by user group, gender or age?
- What are the volumes of activity, cost and quality of these services?
- What type of contract arrangements exist for these services?
- What budgets and finances are available for services, now and in the future?
- What changes to provision could existing providers offer, and who are other potential providers of these services?
- What do service users and carers say about the quality of services?
- What do recent inspections and performance data say about the quality of services?

EARLY HELP - Resource Mapping Strategy Planning Framework

1. Identify whose strategy it is and what documents will be produced
2. Identify who will lead the strategy
3. Identify who will gather the data for the strategy
4. Identify who will steer and advise
5. Identify who will write the strategy
6. Identify who will need to agree the strategy
7. Identify who is the audience for the written strategy
8. Identify the boundaries of the population or the definition to be used e.g. geographical area, age range
9. Identify the services to be considered e.g. health, education, social care, housing, youth justice
10. Identify the timeframe of the strategy
11. Identify the date for completion of the strategy
12. Identify the partners
13. Identify existing partnerships or forums for joint commissioning
14. Agree a definition or understanding of commissioning between the partners
15. Identify any agreed or published outcomes, values and priorities of the partner agencies
16. Identify the key questions or hypotheses to be answered by the strategy
17. Identify research/best practice/ guidance/legislation on what works for children and families and how will any further information be secured
18. Identify the population/demographic data currently available and/or what other data needs to be collected to enable you to answer key questions
19. What relevant and recent consultations or user feedback exist
20. What existing service mapping data is available and/or what arrangements need to be put in place to produce an analysis of the level and costs of the existing service provision
21. Identify gaps in service provision

Appendix 2 Key Documents for reference

In addition to the documents referenced in the main body of this document, we recommend the following:

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Early Intervention: Securing good outcomes for all children and young people (2010) (DCSF now DfE)

- A new approach to child poverty: Tackling the cause of disadvantage and transforming lives (MM Government 2011)
- Grasping the Nettle: C4EO (2011)
- The Child Poverty Act (2006)
- Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation Action Plan (Department of Education 2011)
- Social Value Act

Central to the provision of the implementation of an effective Early Help Strategy will be meeting the standards set out in the current and future Ofsted Inspection Framework <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/>

Most recently, the government has launched the “troubled families” initiative, which will form a key element of how local authorities approach and develop Early help strategies.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/helping-troubled-families-turn-their-lives-around>

This initiative seeks to break inter-generational cycles of deprivation. £450 million has been invested by the government although the scheme will contain “payment by results” elements.

The key elements are:

- get children back into school
- reduce youth crime and anti-social behaviour
- put adults on a path back to work
- reduce the high costs these families place on the public sector each year

The policy encourages local authorities to work with families in ways the evidence shows is more effective, such as:

- joining up local services
- dealing with each family’s problems as a whole rather than responding to each problem or person separately
- appointing a single key worker to get to grips with the family’s problems and work intensively with them to change their lives for the better for the long term
- using a mix of methods that support families and challenge poor behaviour

Additionally the following reports have been considered in the development and implementation of this integrated strategy.

Support and Aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability

This report was published as a Green Paper in March 9th 2011 to outline a new approach to special educational needs and disability. The stated intention is to respond to the frustrations of children and young people, their families and the professionals who work with them.

The consultation ended in June 2011 and the proposals are currently being piloted in some local authorities. However, the legislative framework has not been announced in time for publication of this strategy.

Families in the Foundation Years & Supporting Families in the Foundation Years

This document was published by the Coalition Government in October 2011 and responds to the focus on the early years of a child's life that was highlighted by several influential independent reviews including Marmot, Allen, Field, Tickell and Munro. The document, developed jointly by the Department for Education and the Department for Health, outlines a vision for how the system should meet the needs of parents, children and families from conception until the age of five and recommends a programme of reform for all those who lead, commission and deliver services.

Positive for Youth

This document was published by the government in December 2011. It is a new approach to cross-government policy for young people aged 13-19 in England and aims to bring together all of the government's policies for this age group, presenting a single vision across the interests of at least nine departments. It sets out a shared vision for how all parts of society – including councils, schools, charities, and businesses – can work together in partnership to support families and improve outcomes for young people, particularly those who are most disadvantaged or vulnerable.

The Public Health framework

Healthy lives, Healthy people: Improving outcomes and supporting transparency published in January 2012

Focuses on two key outcomes

- increased healthy life expectancy
- reduced differences in life expectancy and healthy life expectancy between communities

and groups key indicators into four 'domains'

- improving the wider determinants of health
- health improvement
- health protection
- healthcare public health and preventing premature mortality

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council have recently compiled a report providing recent updates on public policy, guidance, strategies, research and programmes relevant to the Council's current and future review and development of Early Help strategies. This document will shortly be available on the council website.

Appendix 3 Integrated Early Help Strategy Development Steering Group

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