



MANCHESTER
CITY COUNCIL

Early Help Strategy

Children, Young People and Families

2013 - 2015



EARLY HELP STRATEGY

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Early Help Strategy endorsed by the Manchester Children's Board is a key element in Manchester's overall vision to improve outcomes for children and young people. It provides guidance for the delivery of Early Help Services and sets out how all partners will work together to plan, commission and deliver at the earliest opportunity a range of responses and services to support children, young people and families.

1.2 Early Help is an approach and the need for Early Help can occur at any point in time. Central to the approach is a focus on increasing independence for families and communities, supporting and building resilience. It is a way of thinking and working that views children, young people and their families as equal partners with an emphasis on doing 'with' rather than doing 'to'; building sustainable social capital which has a positive impact on community wellbeing.

1.3 Effective Early Help requires public service workers to act early, appropriately and assertively supported by a clear pathway to services and interventions available as early and as soon as possible to tackle issues which can emerge at any age, or with a cohort population most at risk of developing problems.

1.4 Manchester's Early Help approach is based on the principle that children, young people and their families develop resilience if a number of key protective factors are in place:

- children have a positive relationship with a significant adult, usually a parent or carer;
- children develop good literacy and communication skills particularly learning to read;
- children's attendance at school is good;
- parent/carers are in employment, are actively preparing to access employment or are ready for and seeking work.

1.5 If risk factors are present in a family and there are no corresponding protective factors, evidence shows that for many children and families long term outcomes are likely to be poor. Where protective factors are not being developed, families may require Early Help.

1.6 This document sets out the key strands of the approach. Related Strategies that have a direct impact on Early Help include:

- The Joint Health and Well-Being Strategy (January 2013);
- Family Poverty Strategy and Action Plan (March 2013);
- Manchester Attendance Strategy (2008, revised 2013);
- The Community Strategy;
- Children and Young People's Plan/Joint Strategy for Improving outcomes;
- The Children's Board Priorities (2013 -15)

2. THE CONTEXT

2.1 Under the leadership of the Manchester Children's Board, Early Help as the overarching guiding principle encompasses the three main Children's Board priorities (2013-15):

- Early Years and School Readiness (implementing the Early Years New Delivery Model so that more children achieve a good level of development by the age of 5)
- The Family (tackling root causes of dependency)
- Narrowing the Gap (childhood obesity, dental hygiene, teenage conceptions, outcomes for LAC)

2.2 The agencies represented at the Children's Board have agreed the three priorities. To make progress they have agreed to work to:

- improve referral, assessment, planning approaches avoiding duplication and fragmentation;
- take a whole family approach;
- improve information sharing;
- enable more families to achieve economic independence;
- enable and empower communities to identify and provide their own solutions;
- reduce the need for high cost specialist services through more effective early intervention;
- promote integrated service delivery and the more effective use of resources;
- hold each other to account for the actions agreed; and
- for those families who require targeted or specialist support partners will work to ensure they experience:
 - an integrated assessment focused on the whole family whilst ensuring an appropriate and safe focus on children;
 - use of evidenced based interventions, getting to the root cause of problems and preventing re-referral; and
 - a focus on getting back to independence quickly.

2.3 The Children's Board works closely with other relevant partnership including the Manchester Safeguarding Children Board (MSCB), the Health and Well Being Board and the Clinical Commissioning Groups. The Board also has strong links with relevant thematic multi-agency groups, for example, the Valuing Young People Board, the Attendance Board and the Early Years New Delivery Model Steering Group.

2.4 Implementation of the Children's Board priorities is led at a place level through the 5 Children's Partnerships which provide local leadership and deal directly with children and families in universal settings on a daily basis. Led by headteachers the 5 SRF Children's Partnerships will focus on the delivery of the Early Help Strategy at a local level.

Public Service Reform and Early Help

2.5 Manchester is also working with the other authorities across Greater Manchester on a programme of Public Service Reform (PSR). Key principles of this approach are:

- family focused assessment and intervention; approach not just based on individuals;
- coordinated and sequenced support to families at the right time and in the right order;
- commissioning and delivery of evidence based interventions, interventions chosen on the strength of the evidence base; and
- persistent work with families until at least one member of the family is in work.

2.6 Based on these principles is a commitment to developing a robust evidence base to inform decision making and sequencing support and intervention. New delivery models, for example, the Early Years New Delivery Model (EYNDM), are based on evidence based evaluation and using those interventions which have the greatest chance of success. This approach applies to Early Help.

3. KEY STRANDS OF EARLY HELP

3.1 The key strands of Early Help are described and developed in the following sections. They can be summarized as: Strand 1: Partnership Working, Strand 2: Role of Universal Services, Strand 3: Infrastructure to support Early Help, Strand 4: Effectiveness of Early Help and Strand 5: The Workforce.

4. STRAND 1 – PARTNERSHIP WORKING

4.1 Effective Early Help requires all who work with children, young people and families to act early, appropriately and assertively. Delivering an effective Early Help approach is not a single agency responsibility; it requires a whole family approach by all those working with children, young people and their families. This includes: Health, Police, Probation, Early Years Services, Schools, Children and Adult Social Care Services, Housing, Voluntary and Community organizations, Connexions and commissioned services.

4.2 Early Help has at its heart a commitment to reducing worklessness and dependency on public services through a focus on public health, prevention and early intervention. Central to this is aligning more services to achieve better outcomes for Manchester residents and to retain well established Voluntary Sector partnership working to create a solid platform for building social capital including volunteering of local people. Partnership working includes a strong focus on work and skills, supporting the development of skills, and qualifications and experience that lead to employment.

4.3 To support the effective delivery of Early Help by Universal Services there needs to be a shared understanding of levels of need easy access to a menu of preventative services, signposting to evidence based interventions and better use of the Manchester Common Assessment Framework (MCAF) by all partners.

Partners in Manchester have signed up to a number of key principles:

- Early Help is about empowering families to achieve economic independence, enabling them to retain control of their lives and preventing escalation to enhanced or specialist services;
- Early Help is about maintaining a family focus and recognizing how problems that adults experience can impact on the whole family;
- Early Help requires a commitment to multi-agency working, a consistent application of thresholds and the use of a single assessment;
- Universal Services particularly schools and health services are central to an effective early help approach and in reducing the flow towards specialist services.

5. STRAND 2 - ROLE OF UNIVERSAL SERVICES

5.1 Many families in Manchester thrive and do well; broadly these families engage with universal services - health care and education. They may also use leisure and play facilities, neighbourhood, community or voluntary sector services. Effective universal services and easy access through universal services to targeted services at a locality level are both central to an effective Early Help approach and in reducing the need for specialist services.

5.2 Universal services are well placed to provide for most families and to 'spot' situations where a more targeted and assertive approach is required. Targeted services and intervention delivered early and through universal services will reduce the need for specialist services. The following are examples which support the implementation of an effective Early Help approach.

5.3 The Early Years New Delivery Model - for children pre-birth until the end of the Early Years Foundations Stage the Early Years New Delivery Model (EYNDM) provides an integrated assessment pathway for all children (universal offer), with a targeted approach using evidence based interventions for those children and families needing additional help. The overarching aim of the approach is to improve school readiness and reduce the requirement for specialist support and interventions by facilitating Early Help.

5.4 Effective universal protection/prevention that is available to and helps all families, for example, immunization programmes and universal and accessible public health information that supports better life style choices. Pro-actively challenging non-engagement, such as missed health appointments, also facilitates Early Help.

5.5 The School Nursing Team delivers services for children of school age (5-19 year) and aim to reduce health inequalities and provide an equitable service across Manchester through a universal and targeted model of provision.

5.6 Through the Manchester Schools' Alliance - schools are working collaboratively and in partnership to establish a self improving school system. Schools support and challenge each other with the overall aim of ensuring outcomes for children and young people surpass national benchmarks and an increasing the number of schools are good or outstanding.

5.7 Strategies that lead to improved access to universal services; an example of this is the Manchester Attendance Strategy; a strategy for all children and young people 5 - 16 years, within which there is a targeted approach to particular children and young people who are persistently absent from school.

5.8 Universal 'Information, Advice and Guidance' (IAG) delivered through schools support and equip young people with the knowledge and skills they need to access further or higher education, apprenticeships or training and ultimately enter the labour market. Targeted support for more vulnerable young people is commissioned through the Connexions contract.

5.9 Targeted interventions offered to particular children, young people and their families with defined risk factors, vulnerabilities or acknowledged additional needs; an example of this is the Trouble Families Programme.

5.10 Targeted but 'predict and prevent' interventions at any point in a young person's life such as positive activities which meet young peoples needs and allow them to flourish; an example of this is the

commissioning of targeted youth and play services delivered by Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) providers.

5.11 The Short breaks offer for families with a disabled child.

5.12 Into adult hood – Early Help needs to be appropriate when children are growing up and circumstances in families can change. In this case the early help offer may focus more on direct support for young people that will help them to build their own resilience and develop the protective factors that will enable them to become successful adults and parents in the future.

6. STRAND 3 - INFRASTRUCTURE TO SUPPORT EARLY HELP

The Manchester Common Assessment Framework (MCAF)

6.1 The Munro Review of Child Protection (2010) identified the Common Assessment Framework as the tool to support the Early Help offer. A key message of the Government's response to Munro was the need for greater transparency and coordination of local arrangements in order to deliver an effective Early Help offer to children, young people and families. In 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' (2013), the pivotal importance of a common and shared framework for assessment agreed by all local partners was re-affirmed.

6.2 In Manchester the Manchester Common Assessment Framework (MCAF) is the agreed tool used by all agencies. MCAF is used when a practitioner identifies that a child or young person has unmet needs which are more than can be provided by one service; the MCAF is the tool for ensuring the information is shared, action plans are clear and coordinated and a lead professional identified. MCAF covers the needs of the child/young person and wider family.

6.4 MCAFs are not needed when a child/young person is progressing well or has additional needs which can be effectively met by a universal/existing service or in a situation where an immediate statutory assessment or specialist assessment is required. The Multi-Agency Levels of Need (Threshold) Document describes levels of need and gives guidance to partners when assessing a child/young person's level of need.

Effective Co-ordination of Early Help – named co-ordinator

6.5 The named coordinator working with the family will ensure that early assessment leads to a coordinated package of support and a 'team around the child/family' which will provide a better and more effective experience for children, young people and their families involved with a range of agencies. The Early Help approach will be supported by:

- A clear articulation of levels of need that is well understood by all partners (Multi-Agency Levels of Need (Threshold) Document).
- A menu of preventative services and evidence base interventions that can be accessed to support the MCAF (Family Service Directory)
- Improved assessment - assessment will be a continuous process, which has the needs of the child at the centre. Providers of services for children will collect detail about cases in one place (MCAF), and use the assessment to co-ordinate services at an Early Help level. The assessment completed by a social worker (Manchester Children's Social Work Assessment and Planning Framework for Children and their Families) will build on information already

known as a result of early help provided to the child/young person and their family, so there is a seamless transfer of information from partners via MCAF and other early help processes.

- Information Sharing; providers of services for children and adults will ensure that they are sharing information, in a secure and appropriate manner.

7. STRAND 4 - EFFECTIVENESS OF EARLY HELP

Manchester Children's Board

7.1 The overall ownership of the Strategy in Manchester sits with the Manchester Children's Board; this strategy has been endorsed by the Children's Board (September 2013)

Manchester Safeguarding Children Board

7.2 Quality Assurance and challenge is provided by Manchester Safeguarding Children Board. Working Together (2013)' confirms the Board's role in scrutinizing and quality assuring the Early Help offer.

7.3 In order to monitor the impact of the Early Help policy the effective use of performance information that gives information about quantity, quality and outcomes of interventions and how partnership working adds value and reduces dependency on services data will need to be routinely collected, analyzed and shared with partners. We will know the policy has been effective when there is:

- An increase in the numbers of children who at the age of 5 have achieved a good level of development at the end of the Foundation Stage (Baseline: 2012/2013: 46.6%);
- A reduction in recorded levels of obesity at age 4/5 and 10/11 years;
- A decrease in persistent absence figures for primary and secondary age children and young people (Baseline: 2012/2013 primary 3.40%, secondary 7.4%);
- A decrease in the figures for those not in education, employment or training;
- An increase in the number (%) adults in work/employment (18-25)
- An increase in the number of MCAFs registered (Baseline: 2011/12:614, 2012/13: 1,187
- A reduction in referrals to specialist services;
- A reduction in referrals to the Contact Centre and an increase in those that are accepted supported by a MCAF.

8. STRAND 5 – WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

8.1 We recognise that the workforce is the most valuable asset and need to ensure that it has the skills, competences and confidence to meet the needs of children, young people and families and deliver future ambitions around commissioning. We require a flexible workforce that can respond to changes and demands on the service and increase independent living for families.

8.2 To deliver an effective Early Help approach requires a commitment to partnership working and a culture of working together, sharing information and resources. Staff training and briefings across the partnership will focus on key principles including: a family approach, sharing information appropriately and routinely and creating independence.

9. IMPLEMENTATION

9.1 The following are areas for implementation. An implementation plan is in place to take this forward; responsibility for securing effective implementation of the strategy and thereby improving outcomes for children, young people and their families rests with individual services, organizations and partnerships.

- The Strategy and Levels of Need Document has been circulated to all partners; arrangements are in place to 'test', monitor and 'feedback' through the Children's Board.
- All Children's Board partners have mechanisms in place for circulating the strategy, training and monitoring impact;
- MCAF (1-4) is used as the consistent and universal method for agencies to record and refer concerns about children; the Contact Centre will require MCAF documentation to process child referrals (unless there is an immediate child protection issue);
- An improved system for ensuring there is a secure and effective electronic method for collecting, collating and transferring data between partners is in place;
- A framework of evidence based interventions that partners, including schools, can draw down from is in place;
- Partners can access accurate and up to date information about available services from the Family Service Directory;
- Arrangements to quality assure the overall impact of the Early Help Strategy through the number and quality of MCAFs is in place with a process for regular reporting to the Manchester Safeguarding Children Board.

9.2 Progress on monitoring implementation of the Strategy will be reported on a monthly basis to the Manchester Children's Board.

