



Early Help Commitment

2023-2026

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Early Help Commitment

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Our Vision

In Hounslow, our vision is to keep children and young people safe, healthy, engaged in learning and to support those who care for them to be emotionally, socially and economically resilient.

Early help in Hounslow supports positive outcomes and experiences for children, young people and their families.

All agencies deliver collaborative, co-produced and co-ordinated early help services that build on strengths, develop skills, nurture resilience and hear the voice of children, young people and their families, especially when they are experiencing difficulties at home or in the wider community.

Characteristics of our vision in practice include:

- ❖ Access to good quality universal services as the foundation for families
- ❖ Services able to respond as soon as possible when difficulties emerge
- ❖ Help available to families in the early years of a child's life to ensure young people have the best start in life
- ❖ Interventions put in place when there is evidence that there is a likelihood of problems emerging in the future
- ❖ Strong relationships between practitioners and families facilitating positive, transparent and effective interactions
- ❖ Effective strategic collaboration and oversight through the Partnership



Context

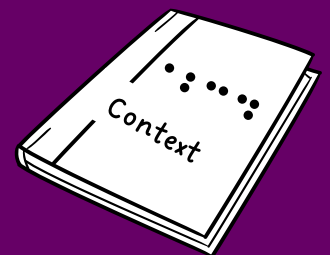
Preventative services can do more to reduce abuse and neglect than reactive services. Research tells us that factors which create gaps in children's wellbeing and development can be positively influenced by early help, to deliver substantial individual and social benefits over time. High quality early help can create positive impact stretching beyond childhood into adulthood.

Early help for Children and families has gained traction in present time by the Independent review of Children's Social Care led by Josh MacAlister (2022). Within the review there was a significant emphasis on the invaluable role of Early help in preventing children from needing statutory services, being looked after and also reducing costs to the LA. There was a strong accentuation that Early help services need to strengthen to be able to meet this purpose, supported by a renewed commitment from central government to support Early help initiatives such as Supporting Families and family hubs.

The greatest outcome of contacts that are received through to Hounslow Children's Social Care front door is in the remit of Early help, with the greatest demand for support within the community and universal services. This is now being harnessed through the family hubs approach, which is the front door to Early help. We have three family hubs in Hounslow covering West, East and Central localities.

Family Hubs are designed to offer early support to children and families from 0-18 (25 with SEND needs), building upon the existing Early Help offer, and acting as a 'one stop shop' for advice and guidance. The concept is not a prescribed range of services – it is an approach that ensures services and professional work better together to provide families with easier access to services in the local community.

It includes for example, health services (antenatal, maternity, health visitor, school nurses); early years, childcare and education, youth services, parenting support and relationship support. We have a more joint up-approach with our partners across the Early help system through the Early help partnership. This enables a unified approach to Early help and clarity on services available for families and the correct avenues to access support.



Defining Early Help in Hounslow

Early Help is the principle of providing support to children and their families at an early stage to prevent difficulties from worsening, at any point in a child's life from early years through to entry into adulthood. It may also be delivered in anticipation of problems before they emerge, where vulnerabilities which are known predictors to future need and risk are identified.

Within Early Help there are a range of responses available to professional's dependent upon the level of need. Emerging need which can be supported by a single agency, or targeted need which requires a more co-ordinated multi-



agency response. In this context “need” is not legally defined, it should be thought of more in terms of the potential for a child to achieve better outcomes than if no support were offered.

Children and families in Hounslow whose level of need has been identified as sitting at tier 2 of the Hounslow Continuum of Need – ‘additional needs’ - are those who will be supported through early help. This includes both those who are experiencing emerging need which has not yet escalated, and those who may have previously been supported by specialist interventions but whose level of need has reduced and can be supported at a lower level.

Thresholds of Need

Whilst thresholds are important, and act as a guide to what each part of the service undertakes, the emphasis needs to be on the change that we can facilitate within families rather than meeting a threshold.

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The level of need encompassed at tier 2 is broad and can be split into three sub-sections: emerging need which can be supported by a single agency, targeted need which requires a co-ordinated multi-agency Team Around the Family response, and intensive need with a response led by the Families First & Intensive Support Services.

Our collaborative model of Early Help will span 3 levels on the continuum of need spanning from universal to targeted:

Tier 1 – No additional needs

A child, young person or family whose needs are being met or whose needs can be met by universal services. These families may access support themselves or be signposted to websites / online support by universal providers.

Tier 2 – Early Help

A child, young person or family with additional needs that can be met by a single agency coordinating additional support. Universal providers will undertake a universal assessment and develop a family plan, working with families to make the desired change. For many families the change can be achieved with this Early Help given by a Lead Professional.

Tier 3 – Complex needs

A child, young person or family whose needs would be best met by a co-ordinated programme of support from more than one agency and where the family have demonstrated no change after initial support. These families will be referred to Hounslow’s targeted Early Help team Families first intensive support service (FFIS)

Tier 4 – Acute needs

A child, young person or family who requires an immediate referral to statutory social care with safeguarding concerns. These families will not go via Early Help, but directly to the Intake assessment team.

Pathways

What the tiers look like in practice:

Tier 1 - Universal needs Tier 2 - Early help	Family hubs and wider community services
Tier 3 - Targeted Early help	Family's first Intervention Service (FFIS)
Tier 4 - Acute and specialist need	Children social care



Aims

The overarching aim of this Partnership Commitment is:

To harness the total resource, we have available in the Partnership to ensure that, wherever possible, any presenting need within a family is resolved at an early stage: to prevent both adverse experiences for families and avoidable, costly escalation to specialist services.

In short, that children and young people in Hounslow receive effective support at the earliest stage possible and at the lowest, most financially efficient level appropriate to their needs.

Within this overarching ambition, the Partnership Commitment will aim to:

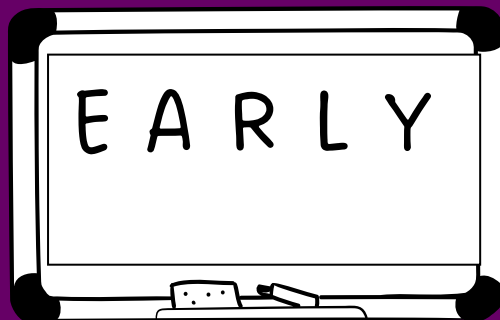
- Formalise our commitment to working as a strategic Early Help Partnership
- Create a consistent and co-ordinated early help approach, so that all services which deliver early help work as a single system rather than as individual agencies
- Meet the expectations of a mature Early help system in line with the Early help system guide
- Support any future Early Help commissioning intentions and development of the market



Early Help Principles

All early help activity across the Partnership will be delivered in accordance with the following principles:

- ❖ Our Early Help offer is based on and responsive to Evidence of local need
- ❖ Families are empowered to help themselves and remain the driver of their progress wherever possible
- ❖ The Partnership workforce is equipped to identify and support need at the earliest opportunity
- ❖ A strong relationship with the family and informed consent are at the heart of our interventions
- ❖ Multi-agency practitioners work in a co-ordinated way for the whole family as a unit – one family, one plan - with the family's voice at the centre
- ❖ Intervention is promoted at the earliest, safest, most cost-effective level
- ❖ Pathways to facilitate timely escalation to safeguard from harm
- ❖ The Partnership works as a strategic whole to maximise resource and impact: 'early help is everyone's business'
- ❖ Sustainability underpins our model, with ongoing development informed by views of families



Outcomes for Children & Families

We recognise that improved outcomes for children and families are rarely attributable to one intervention in isolation and are often the product of multi-agency input and multiple factors. Thus, the outcomes we aspire to achieve through the Partnership Commitment reflect holistic impact on children through the combined efforts of the Partnership:



- ❖ Children & young people are supported to stay within their family home
- ❖ Young people are supported to avoid becoming involved in crime and anti-social behaviour
- ❖ Children & young people are supported to learn and are making progress within education
- ❖ Children & young people are supported to remain in school
- ❖ Attendance is good and we know which of our children & young people are not in school
- ❖ Children & young people are supported to stay safe and resilient to risk of exploitation
- ❖ Young people are engaged in positive activities and supported to access education, employment and training opportunities
- ❖ Children & young people have good physical and emotional health and lead healthy lifestyles
- ❖ Parents and carers are supported to help reduce parental conflict in the home
- ❖ Children & young people's needs are met without requiring specialist interventions



Our Priorities

We have 9 priorities to develop our Early Help system as follows:

- 1)** To develop an Early Help workforce that is committed to delivering relational and strength-based practice to families
- 2)** To develop our commitment into an agreed collaborative and co-productive Early help strategy
- 3)** To ensure the Early help practice framework is shared and embedded across the Early help system
- 4)** To develop training across the Early help workforce in line with our Early help strategy and framework
- 5)** To continue to develop our model of Family Hubs as an integral part of our strategy.
- 6)** To continue to build links with the voluntary and community sector to enhance our collaborative offer
- 7)** To develop an integration of shared case management systems across the partnership
- 8)** To use the partnership as the vehicle to advance the Early help strategy
- 9)** To ensure the strategic leadership are involved in the progression of the Early help system
- 10)** To develop an assurance framework for the Early help system

Governance and Evaluation

The Early help partnership will hold accountability for the monitoring and development of this Partnership Agreement, reporting into the borough's Children's Delivery Group on a quarterly basis. Reporting will also take place to the Hounslow Safeguarding Children's Board as required.

The progress of the Partnership Commitment will be evaluated on a quarterly basis using the agreed Early Help system guide assessment tool.

Hounslow Early Help Partnership

The Hounslow Early Help Partnership has been established to plan and oversee, collaboratively, the development of early help in the borough for children and families. As a Partnership, we recognise the importance of intervening early where children and their families face difficulties. We commit to working together to maximise the quality of early help in Hounslow, and to share accountability for the implementation, monitoring and success of this Partnership Agreement. The Early Help Partnership in Hounslow is responsible for driving and developing the active, collaborative Early Help system for children, young people and families in Hounslow. It will provide one unified forum for all Early help activities with a strategic membership to help propel and realise the Early help vision.

Key responsibilities of the Early Help Partnership

- The Early Help Partnership will provide governance and accountability to the Early help system in Hounslow
- Agree and develop a coordinated Early Help Strategy, shared practice framework and approach to early help
- Develop and drive implementation of a partnership annual workplan to achieve the agreed priorities of the partnership and improve outcomes and experience of families
- Ensure full and consistent multi-agency participation in delivery of early help activity in the borough, including Family hubs and the Supporting Families programme.
- Provide multi-agency accountability, scrutiny, and challenge in relation to progress and performance of early help activity, striving for the best possible outcomes for families.
- Ensure a commitment to securing, and acting with accountability on, the feedback of children, young people and families in relation to the early help approach of the borough.
- Bring together partners from a range of agencies to look at opportunities for how our joint resources can be maximised into a collaborative approach to Early Help.

