

# CITY OF LONDON EARLY HELP STRATEGY 2023-26

## THE EARLY HELP VISION

All children, young people and families who access the Early Help Service in the City of London are supported to address their concerns and are provided with practical assistance to help them to live full and happy lives.



Zero cases were stepped up to Social Care



Four cases stepped down from social care to Early Help and zero were re-referred



We work with children who identify with all genders and none



All of the 59 families supported by our early help service in 2022 had their needs effectively identified and met



95.6% of families report a high level of trust for Early Help and feel genuinely understood and listened to

### Our Challenges

- Identifying young carers in the City of London and ensuring they are supported
- Managing an increase in referrals to the service
- Meeting the needs of children and young people whose wellbeing is impacted by low income/overcrowded households

### Our Strengths

- Joint work with the Home Office provided temporary housing, health services and schooling to 571 Afghan guests in August 2021.
- Working with partner agencies, we develop good working relationships with families.
- Strong links with Children's Social Care means that children and families are provided with enough support to prevent them needing social care.
- We consider the whole family, how they are impacted by the systems around them and seek to encourage system change to help them.
- Families feel very well supported by us because we are responsive to their needs, quick to address issues, empathetic and genuinely caring.



## WHAT IS EARLY HELP?

Early Help works with partners to provide support to children, young people and families with emerging problems or other needs including:

- serious housing needs,
- mental or emotional ill health,
- help and guidance for young people (0-18 years)
- support for children with SEND and health needs.

## YOU SAID, WE DID

Young people and their families have made it clear to us that they would like to see what action has been taken as result of what they have told us. We will continue to produce a 'you said, we did' update to show what has been done based on the feedback that children, young people, and their families have given us.

## THE VOICE OF CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR FAMILIES

We want children, young people and their families to work with us to help make the City of London a better place for them.

Children, young people and their families can have their say and be involved in the service they receive.

This includes the following:



## WHERE THE PLAN SITS

City of London Corporate Plan 2018-23

Children and Young People's Plan 2022-25

**Early Help Strategy 2023-26**

Corporate Parenting Strategy

Early Years Strategy

Sufficiency Strategy

Thresholds of Need

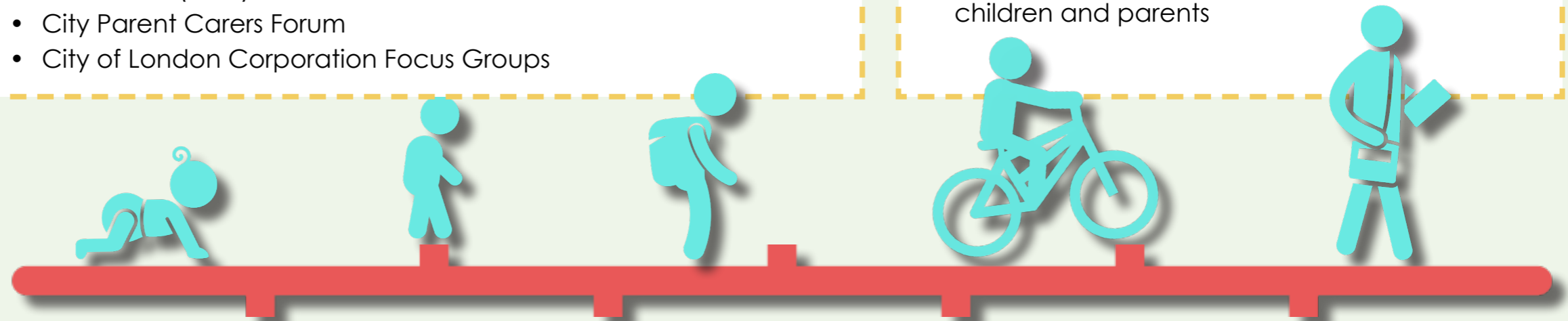
SEND Strategy

### OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES TO GET INVOLVED

- Action for Children Survey
- City of London Youth Forum
- City of London Children in Care Council and activities
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Short Breaks
- City of London Talks and Listens Enthusiastically (COLTALE) programme
- City of London Member and Deputy Member of Youth Parliament (MYP)
- City Parent Carers Forum
- City of London Corporation Focus Groups

### WHAT CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR FAMILIES HAVE TOLD US

- They would like to see the process around short breaks payments simplified
- Better assessments and support for siblings/ young carers
- More activities for young adults/16+
- Easier access to counselling and mentoring support
- More staff training around the needs of deaf children and parents



### Our outcomes for children, young people and their families...

#### Considered

Children, young people and families feel service development takes their needs into account.

#### Supported

Families feel supported to address their needs.

#### Safe

All children and young people feel safe in all aspects of their lives.

#### Treated Equally

Inequalities experienced by children, young people and families in the City are addressed.

#### Listened to

Children, young people and families feel their needs are identified, understood, and are responded to quickly.

#### Prioritised

Children, young people, and their families feel their needs are a priority by all services that work with them.

# The Impact of Our Universal Offer



The aim of the Early Help Strategy is to build on our excellent universal partnership work.

Our universal services continue to ensure that the needs of children and families are met in a timely and impactful manner helping to prevent escalation into the Early Help Service for most of the population.

OUR IMPACT	OUR FOCUS IS	HOW WE WILL ACHIEVE THIS	HOW WE WILL MEASURE THIS
<p><b>All children and young people feel safe in all aspects of their lives.</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To assess the needs of children quickly, to optimise their chances and improve their health and wellbeing.</li> <li>To make sense of the child, young person and family's world through relationships, focusing on the whole family system rather than individuals.</li> <li>To ensure resources are used efficiently and effectively to ensure high quality outcomes for the family.</li> <li>To help parents build resilience and strength to ensure their children feel safe and can thrive without social service's support.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will complete Early Help Assessments within 20 working days of receiving consent from parents/carers.</li> <li>We will assess the needs of children and families and agree goals which will inform the intervention required for the family.</li> <li>We will assess the needs of children and families and agree goals which will inform the intervention required for the family.</li> <li>Team Around the Family (TAF) Meetings will take place every 8-12 weeks to ensure that the agreed plan is being adhered to by all services involved and goals are being met.</li> <li>Cases will remain open to Early Help until the agreed upon plan has been completed and the interventions put in place have been embedded into the family and are working well.</li> </ol>	<p>In 2022, 46 early help assessments were completed. Of these, 89% were completed within 20 days.</p> <p>We will continue to monitor the number of Early Help assessments completed month by month and aim to increase our percentage to 95%.</p>
<p><b>Children, young people and families feel their needs are identified, understood, and are responded to quickly.</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To have a robust Social Care duty and Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub service.</li> <li>Our Early Help practitioners always seek to empower children, young people and families to make the changes they need to improve their circumstances.</li> <li>We work with children, young people and families to build social emotional intelligence, increase their capacity and support networks to encourage growth.</li> <li>Work alongside our colleagues with child protection expertise to ensure those children and young people who are on the boundary of statutory social care are provided with early intervention services that meet the family's to avoid a step up into social care.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will work closely with our colleagues in social care to ensure open communication upon receiving a referral to ensure we are providing the right service at the right time.</li> <li>Our assessments will be thorough with close management oversight throughout the assessment period.</li> <li>During the assessment period, any areas of concern that can be immediately addressed will be, and children and families will be provided with support and assistance from services who will remain working with the family throughout the intervention.</li> <li>Children and families will be signposted to additional services following the assessment and be provided with a copy of their assessment to understand how the recommendations were formed.</li> <li>Complex cases will be discussed with social care and senior management to ensure the needs of the family are being met and to enquire if we can do more within the early help service before stepping up into social care.</li> </ol>	<p>In 2022, contact was made within one day of receiving all referrals into Early Help.</p> <p>We will continue to monitor the timeliness from contact to referral and remain 100% efficient in our initial contact with families.</p>
<p><b>Families feel supported to address their needs.</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We offer targeted and tailored parenting support.</li> <li>We work alongside families and go on a journey with them throughout the assessment and intervention.</li> <li>We use a strengths-based approach, utilising a families' strengths in the decision-making process.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will ensure to be fair in our assessments and be clear with families regarding the needs identified and allow the voice of the child to be at the centre of the assessment and intervention process.</li> <li>We will act as advocates for children and families throughout the intervention and liaise with our partner agencies to ensure needs are being met.</li> <li>We will draw on our resources and use the skills and expertise of our Early Help Team to provide one-to-one parenting support to families where required.</li> <li>The Early Help Team will use the tools they have at their disposal to identify neglect and use a strengths-based approach to provide families with support to address the areas of need identified.</li> </ol>	<p>Consent is sought from families prior to assessments being completed to ensure we are able to liaise with all involved services and speak on their behalf.</p> <p>Feedback is sought from parents and children prior to closing a case to ascertain their views and feelings on the intervention provided.</p>

## OUR IMPACT

## OUR FOCUS IS TO

## HOW WE WILL ACHIEVE THIS

## HOW WE WILL MEASURE THIS

**Inequalities experienced by children, young people and families in the City of London are addressed.**

1. We ensure the voice of parents in The City are heard concerning accessibility issues around physical and emotional health.
2. We want to ensure the next generation has a stake in the delivery of services and benefits from The City's success.
3. We want to ensure our services are accessible to all that meet the threshold.
4. We intervene at the earliest stage to reduce the number of referrals that reach the need for statutory intervention.

1. The Early Help Lead will attend City of London Parent and Carer Forum meetings and feedback concerns to the team and senior managers.
2. We will work alongside our partners in participation to help engage our service users to ensure their voices are heard and they have input in strategic thinking and service improvement.
3. We will work alongside partner agencies such as primary care and mental health services to address accessibility issues.
4. We will work alongside our partners in Education and Early Years to address SALT accessibility issues.
5. We will highlight any inequalities identified during the assessment process to ensure they are addressed, and services are provided to children and families.
6. We will offer an Early Help assessment to all children and families who meet threshold and if consent is not provided, we will signpost based on the information we have at the time to ensure some form of intervention may be offered to the family.

We will log all incidents and observations of racism and discrimination in order to continue the discussion and development of an anti-racist practice approach across safeguarding partnerships.

When an individual or family tells us they have experienced racism and/or discrimination we acknowledge and accept their experience. We will then arrange for a case audit to be undertaken to review current practice and develop further learning.

**Children, young people, and their families feel their needs are a priority by all services that work with them.**

1. The referral process for Early Help support is accessible to all services who work with children and young people 0-18.
2. Effective communication between Early Help support and outside agencies who work with children and young people 0-18.
3. Increase our awareness of SEND support.
4. Provide a holistic approach to service delivery to ensure we are working with partner agencies to offer an integrated early help offer.

1. We will ensure to have a resource library in the service; therefore, all social care staff are aware of what is available to children, young people and families in the City and Hackney.
2. We will hold multi-agency meetings quarterly to discuss cases and ensure we are providing a coordinated approach and are also aware of changing policies and provisions within the City.
3. We will work alongside our partners in commissioning to ensure we are aware of new SEND support services available.
4. We will contribute to discussions of what is required for children and families to help ensure services commissioned meet the needs of the children and families we serve.
5. We will ensure we are aware of all changes to commissioned services that will affect our children and families.

Action for Children will seek feedback from service users yearly to ascertain their views on the service received from Early Help.

**Children, young people and families feel service development takes their needs into account.**

1. We consent to service audits regularly to ensure we are providing the best service possible.
2. We remain accountable to our stakeholders, partner agencies, families, children and young people in the City of London.
3. We work alongside commissioning to ensure cost effective and efficient resources which will make the biggest impact on outcomes are sought.
4. We make sure our workforce has consistent personal and professional development opportunities that will not only benefit them but also the children, young people and families that access to the service.

1. We will implement feedback received from service users and peers as part of the service audits.
2. We will work in partnership with other local authorities and clearly define the scope of early help work across London.
3. We will share and hear good practice and help improve our Early Help service.
4. We will work collaboratively with our partners in Education and Early Years to work toward building a centre in the City of London that offers integrated early intervention services in line with Hackney's offer of a Family Hub.
5. We will work collaboratively with our partners in Hackney and engage in training offered that is in line with their early help service offer.
6. We will engage in training that will continue to upskill our Early Help Team to ensure we are providing the best service possible to the children and families we serve.
7. We will remain accountable to the City & Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership (CHSCP) and implement service changes required to meet the needs of the children, young people and families we serve.

Early Help will work collaboratively with the Commissioning Team to gather service user feedback regarding changes and new services provided.