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<tr>
<th><strong>Title:</strong></th>
<th>Early Help Service</th>
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<td>Updated in February 2018 by Tenidola Awoyemi - Service Manager</td>
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<td><strong>Issue 2</strong></td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Purpose</strong></th>
<th>The purpose of this policy is to set out the London Borough of Brent’s Early Help Service and how this operates.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who is Responsible</strong></td>
<td>Nigel Chapman, Operational Director</td>
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<td><strong>Legislation</strong></td>
<td>The Childcare Act 2006</td>
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<td>Children and Families Act 2014</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Forms / links</strong></th>
<th>Brent Early Help Framework</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Early Help Assessment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What is Early Help?

Early Help is about identifying needs within families early; providing preventative support before problems become complex and more intractable and providing the right service at the right time. Services are designed to respond early to tackle issues emerging for children, young people and families at risk of having poor outcomes.

Evidence suggests that an early response is a more effective and more efficient way of delivering services. It is better to provide an intense, focussed intervention when problems first emerge, rather than delivering a more costly statutory intervention when the needs have escalated. The Early Help service aims to reduce the demands upon specialist and higher tier services and ensure children and young people can flourish and not experience harmful long-term consequences.

Early Help does not only mean offering support to very young children. Support may be offered early in life, or early after the emergence of a particular need. Although research shows that the most impact can be made during a child’s early years, problems may emerge at any point throughout childhood and adolescence. Therefore services are offered to children and young people and their families aged 0 – 18, or 25 with additional needs.

Brent Early Help Offer

The Brent offer of Early Help reflects the recognition that it is better to identify and deal with problems early rather than to respond when difficulties have become acute and demand action by statutory or more intensive services.

Early Help Services / Teams

Early Help services are provided through separate but integrated teams, which offer more intensive support to those with more complex and high levels of need and less intensive support to families whose needs are just emerging.

- **The Family Solutions Team incorporating the Troubled Families (TF) initiative.** The Family Solutions (BFS) team is part of Brent’s Early Help offer. Early Help aims to prevent children and young people from reaching the threshold for child protection whilst also ensuring that any escalating risks of harm are addressed through robust ‘step up and step-down’ arrangements. The Family Solutions team incorporates the Troubled Families (TF) initiative and has responsibility for implementing the TF programme across the whole Children and Young People (CYP) economy (internal and external).

  The team also provides a 'step-down' support to families referred from the Children’s Social Care Localities service who no longer require an allocated Social Worker. In addition to the Family Solutions team, Brent’s Early Help offer also includes a Family Support service which consists of Family Support Workers
(FSWs) and Family Support Assistants (FSAs). These are based in the Children’s Centres and work with families with children up to 5 years old. Cases (at the appropriate level) can be ‘stepped down’ or allocated to the FSWs. Cases allocated to the FSAs / FSWs do not have to meet the TF criteria, but all referral must be screened for TF prior to allocation. In addition, families assessed by the team as being at escalated risk of harm are ‘stepped up’ to Children’s Social Care for statutory support services (see step up and step down flowchart).

- **The Early Help Panel** is a multidisciplinary panel which consists of representatives from Family Solutions, Health, Education and the Aligned services. The aim of the Panel is to hold robust multi agency discussions about complex families who meet the Troubled Families criteria and ensure that services / resources are targeted at the right level at the right time for Troubled Families.

- **Children’s Centres** form a core part of the Early Help offer in Brent. The centres aim to promote the inclusion of all children, their families and carers in a safe and nurturing environment. In October 2015, Barnardos in a 4-year partnership with Brent Council took over management of 11 Children’s Centres with the remaining 3 Children’s Centres within the Harlesden locality continuing to be managed by the Governing Body of Curzon and Fawood Federation. The network of 14 Children’s Centres provide children and families access to universal health, early education and employment services and targeted support for families with additional needs. The teams include Community Outreach Workers, Family Support Workers and Assistants who all work to the Brent Early Help model. Children’s Centres also enable pre-school children with additional needs and disabilities to have extra support.

- **Early Support** coordinates care for disabled children from birth to aged five and their families who receive four or more services from multidisciplinary professionals in health, social care, education and the voluntary sector. As part of Early Support, we operate Portage which is a home visiting service for families with children aged 0-4 years with a disability, additional needs or developmental delay. Portage is available for families prior to their child/ren starting nursery or school and supports parents in improving their child/ren’s confidence, communication, physical and social skills and learning and development.

- **Willow Children’s Centre** accommodates a high quality special needs nursery that has specific expertise in meeting the needs of young children with additional needs related to disabilities and/or where a child has a Child Protection Plan or Looked After Child Plan.

- **Parenting Support team** delivers a menu of evidence based support and interventions that parents can access relevant to the different life stages of their children. The support starts for parents in the ante-natal period through to adolescence. Parenting support (both on a one to one basis and groups) is offered via the Children’s Centres, schools and other community venues using a
range of evidence based parenting programmes.

- **Aligned Services** - A major part of the Working with Families change programme was the creation of an ‘Early Help Aligned Services’ team for Brent. The team has professionals from various partner agencies who are matrix managed by a Family Solutions team leader including Job Centre Plus Advisors, Connexions Personal Advisor, Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA), DV Perpetrator worker, therapeutic play support for children impacted by Domestic Abuse.

- **Youth Offending Service (YOS)** - YOS is comprised of representatives from the local authority, police, National Probation Service, CAMHS, and local service providers. In addition to supporting young people who have offended. To successfully complete court and police ordered youth justice disposals, the YOS offers some non-statutory early interventions and preventative work funded by MOPAC. The YOS principal aims are to:

  - Reduce the likelihood of young people offending or re-offending.
  - Protect children and young people.
  - Protect members of the public.
  - Ensure that sentences are served.

The YOS also focuses on achieving three Youth Justice Outcomes:

  - Reduction in youth re-offending.
  - Reduction in the numbers of first time entrants to the justice system.
  - Reduction in the use of youth custody.

- **Education Welfare Service (EWS)** - provides a statutory service when children go missing from education. Children who go missing from education may be at risk of abuse or neglect. The EWS provides an outline of systems within the Children and Young People department for identifying and maintaining contact with children missing education and for identifying those at risk of going missing from education. The Service ensures that Brent Council meets its statutory duties relating to establishing the identities of children in their area who are not receiving a suitable education and the education and safeguarding and welfare of children more generally.

The EWS aims to secure the safeguarding of children and young people by ensuring that fewer drop out of the system and those that do are

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1 Children missing from education are (a) children of compulsory school age who are not on a school roll, and who are not receiving a suitable education otherwise than being at school and; (b) children on roll at a school whose whereabouts are unknown.

located, drawn back in, and re-engaged more effectively. All schools (maintained, academies and independent) have a safeguarding duty regarding their pupils, and as part of this should investigate any unexplained absences. The school has a duty to make a referral to the EWS.

The principal aims of the service are:

- Ensuring all children who are registered at school or alternative provision attend regularly and that cases of poor attendance are followed up as quickly as possible;
- Ensuring that immediate steps are put in place to try to locate children who go missing from school in Brent;
- Following up on cases of children who are found without any educational provision;
- Maintaining a database of children who appear to be missing from education;
- Working closely with other local authorities to locate children who appear to be missing;
- Being alert to any potential safeguarding concerns and dealing with them effectively.
- Providing services that include child employment/performance licences and chaperone licences and being the Education Welfare Officer for Gypsy, Roma & Traveller pupils

**The Early Help Assessment (EHA)**

The Early Help Assessment (EHA), which replaced the Common Assessment Framework, is a multi-agency referral and assessment form that supports identification of needs within a family when they first arise. The EHA supports improvement of the families' situation via targeted, effective evidenced based early interventions and multi-agency support for the whole family. Families are required to give consent for the sharing of information between agencies to facilitate multi-agency working.

Integral to this process is a Signs of Safety approach which is embedded across the Early Help pathway. The EHA also screens families to determine if they meet the Troubled Families criteria to support with the identification and claiming of families that are eligible for the programme.

Referrals to the Early Help Family Solutions service are received via the Brent Family Front Door (BFFD) and are triaged to determine threshold and then signposted on to the most appropriate support service. This ensures that families receive the right help, at the right time, and as quickly as possible.

The Early Help pathway aims to prevent children and young people from reaching the threshold for child protection whilst also ensuring that any escalating risks of
harm are addressed through robust ‘step-up and step-down’ arrangements. There are clear processes in place for stepping cases up and down the continuum of need and risk.

**The Troubled Families Programme**
The Brent Family Solutions Team receives referrals for, and carries out work with a broad range of families with complex needs. All these families fall within Brent’s cohort of the Government’s ‘Troubled Families’ programme. The Troubled Families (TF) Programme is a national initiative that started in 2012. Brent Council was amongst the 63 early starters for the January 2015 to 2020 expanded Troubled Families programme which aims to ‘turn around’ families that have at least 2 of the 6 following problems:

- Parents and children involved in crime or anti-social behaviour
- Children who have not been attending school regularly
- Children who need help
- Adults out of work or at risk of financial exclusion and young people at risk of worklessness
- Families affected by domestic violence and abuse
- Parents and children with a range of health problems
Safeguarding or neglect concerns

Discuss with line-manager (or senior manager in BFS) Consult BFFD as required

Inform family of decision to step up unless this compromises a child’s safety

1) Complete child contact on Mosaic and SoS template 2)

Handover - joint visit with allocated social worker
Case Closure
STEP DOWN FLOW CHART
CHILDREN’S SOCIAL CARE TO FAMILY SOLUTIONS AND CHILDREN’S CENTRES FAMILY SUPPORT

Child & Family Assessment

CIN Plan

CFA Complete Threshold for CSC not met: support required as TF or under 5 (children’s centre FSW)

Family consent to support from BFS/children’s centre

Consult with BFS and agree step down

Handover Joint home visit

Handover BFS/Children’s centre attend CIN review or joint visit

1) Case closure 2) Complete step down episode