



Croydon Partnership Early Help Strategy 2018 – 2020

Our ambition is that all children and young people in Croydon will be safe, healthy and happy, and will aspire to be the best they can be. The future is theirs.



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Foreword

This strategy sets out how Croydon's strategic partners and wider stakeholders will collectively deliver early help in partnership with children, young people and their families in order to improve the life chances of our vulnerable and disadvantaged families. There are many excellent examples of early help already working in Croydon and this strategy seeks to harness the work already in place and create an effective support system for children and their families which builds on existing good practice and partnership working. Families are best placed to understand, care for and nurture their children, however, nationally it is estimated that around 30% of children and young people will, at some stage, experience difficulties which if addressed early enough, can be prevented from escalating into costly statutory services. If early help is not offered this can, in worst cases, result in children's social, emotional, health and educational development to be impaired and can lead to family breakdown. If effective, early help empowers children and families to regain control of their circumstances and help transform the lives of vulnerable children.

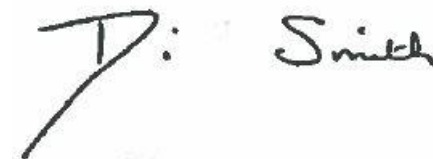
Public services are operating within a climate of unprecedented challenge as demand for specialist services increases against an environment of austerity and reduced resources. An effective Partnership Early Help Strategy requires the full commitment of a joined up integrated multi-agency approach, appropriate and consistent application of 'thresholds' and an alignment of agencies resources. As described in Working Together Guidance, delivery of effective early help in order to keep children safe is not a single agency responsibility and requires a whole family approach, owned by all stakeholders, and working in partnership with children and their families. This includes schools, health, police, probation, children social care, services for adults, voluntary, faith and community organisations, private organisations and the wider public.

In Croydon we have made a commitment to providing effective support to our children and families working in partnership with our statutory and voluntary partners. This autumn 2018 we plan to refresh our Children and Young People Partnership Board (CYPP Board) to oversee governance of the Partnership Early Help Strategy and this will support greater partnership working in order to improve outcomes for our children and their families.

In the meantime the Chair of our Croydon Safeguarding Children's Board will sign off this strategy on behalf of partners across Croydon, with agreement that each agency will secure the necessary approvals from their own governance arrangements and adopt the strategy within their organisations.



Councillor Alisa Fleming
Cabinet Member for Children and Families
Croydon Council



Di Smith
Independent Chair,
Croydon Safeguarding Children Board

1. Preface

In July 2018, the Government published revised statutory guidance [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#): a guidance to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

Working Together sets out the legal requirements that health professionals, social workers, police, education professionals and others working with children must follow. The guidance emphasises that effective support and safeguarding for children and young people is the responsibility of all professionals working with children and young people and provides advice in support to sections 10 and 11 of the Children Act 2014 where the primary duties for all agencies are set out.

Working Together reminds us that “Nothing is more important than children’s welfare. Children who need help and protection deserve high quality and effective support as soon as a need is identified. We want a system that responds to the needs and interests of children and families not the other way around. In such a system, practitioners (individuals who work with children and their families in any capacity) will be clear about what is required of them individually, and how they need to work together in partnership with others.”

Working Together is defined as statutory guidance and therefore all professionals working with children, young people and families should make time to read the document. Local arrangements to implement the requirements should be prioritised by leaders and senior managers in every agency with responsibilities for children, young people, families and carers to enable them to safeguard children and to act in their best interests.

Effective Support ‘Right Help, Right time’ Guidance for Practitioners provides the practitioner guide to effective support in Croydon which explains the criteria for providing help to children, young people, families and carers and could be developed as the local ‘threshold document’ required by Working Together 2018 and should be read in parallel with the Working Together guidance.



2 Introduction

Croydon is one of the largest London boroughs with a population of nearly 100,000 children under 18 years with the largest population (38,000) of young people aged 10 to 17 years of all the London Boroughs. Approximately 23% of children in the Borough are living in low income families. Children from minority ethnic groups account for 58% of all children living in the area, compared to 21% in the country as a whole.

We believe that children should grow and achieve within their own families when it is in their best interest and is safe for them to do so. The majority of children and families are strong and resilient and have good networks and resources to meet their needs. However, some families will experience difficulties from time to time. Early help means taking action to support a child, young person or their family early in the life of a problem, as soon as it emerges. It can be required at any stage in a child's life from pre-birth through to adulthood and applies to any problem or need that the family cannot deal with or meet on their own.

Recent influential studies and reports ¹ show that providing early and effective support to families can prevent complex problems emerging and enable children and adults to reach their full potential.

Key messages include:

- Families benefit more from preventative, rather than reactive services. This approach adds value and is cost effective for all concerned.
- Current austere times with financial constraints and welfare changes make it even more important that we use our resources effectively to improve life chances for those children who are at the most disadvantage.
- High performing early help services are joined up and coordinated at both strategic and operational levels.
- Robust effective early help services prevent needs escalating.
- Services provided during pregnancy and when children are young (under 5) have greater impact on outcomes. Early childhood is one of the most critical phases of human development. It begins before birth, when a baby's body and brain are being formed, continues through

¹ Early Intervention: the next steps and Early Intervention: Smart Investment, Massive Savings (Graham Allen MP (2011), Foundation Years: Independent Review on Poverty (Frank Field MP Dec 2010, Munro Review of Child Protection, Final Report (Professor Eileen Munro, 2011), The Early Years: Foundations for life, health and learning (Dame Clare Tickell, 2010), Fair Society, Healthy Lives (Sir Michael Marmot, 2010)

early infancy when key relationships are established, and developmental milestones reached, and includes the preschool years and the transition into school. Children learn to move, communicate, and interact with the world, and develop a sense of personal and cultural identity. Early childhood offers the greatest opportunities for positive human development but is also the period when children are most at risk. Negative influences or Adverse Child Experiences (ACEs) on a child's development during early childhood can be irreversible without effective support and interventions.

- More recent research indicates, that in the teenage years, young people have an increased level of plasticity in the brain which may make young people more susceptible to risk taking and potentially negative influences. Having effective evidence based early help services in place provides an opportunity to reverse the impact of previous negative experiences, even if experienced in their early years by redefining neural pathways.

We know from what children and their families tell us that it can be daunting asking for help and they would like to be supported by the first person they approach – this is often someone already known to them. This strategy helps us to make every contact count.

This strategy describes who can benefit from early help, how it is accessed and who delivers it. It enables families, communities and all professionals to:

- Respond quickly and effectively to the need for early help
- Intervene and provide support to stop an issue escalating
- Ensure there is consensual and partnership approach to working with all children and their families



The strategy supports the 'Effective Support providing the Right Help, Right Time' framework being adopted across Croydon ensuring a cohesive early help offer collectively delivered by all partners with a commitment to:

- Working better together in an open, honest partnership approach with consent of the child and their family
- Identifying strengths and needs and working together to find practical and achievable solutions
- Providing the right information and advice to enable children and their families to make positive changes themselves with support tailored to their need

- Help children and their families to build protective factors and family resilience to prevent situations recurring

3. Vision

Our ambition for children is that **all children and young people in Croydon will be safe, healthy and happy, and will aspire to be the best they can be. The future is theirs.**

In Croydon we believe that every child should have the opportunity to reach their full potential. We believe that children should grow and achieve within their own families when it is in their best interest and it is safe for them to do so. By working together, we will develop flexible services which are responsive to children and families' needs.

Croydon is establishing a vision for the future that will provide for:

- A system wide approach, with joint pooled resources and pathways operating across organisational boundaries
- An outcome focussed approach delivering long term sustainable solutions for individuals and families to secure resilience and independence
- A shift from acute provision to an increase in prevention and early help activity
- Evidence based services that are built around customer need
- Locality based delivery where appropriate

Early help is *everyone's responsibility*; we want children, families, communities, including faith groups, and agencies to work together so that families are assisted to help themselves and are supported as soon as a need arises, thereby improving the wellbeing and life chances for Croydon's children and young people.

We will as partners together:

- Understand those children and their families where children may be at risk of not reaching their full potential and share concerns
- Build a relationship with the child and family as early as possible, and work with them to create a family environment that provides children with the best life chances and prevent problems from arising or escalating
- Reduce the number of children and their families requiring support from specialist services.

Croydon's Partnership Early Help strategy and delivery plan has been developed across the partnership, and will align with Croydon's vision for the new 'operating model' enabling us to provide a joined up, effective early help offer for children aged 0 to 18 years and their families; delivered on a locality, evidence based model through a shared partnership approach to collectively delivering universal and early help services.

The strategy will be implemented, now agreed by Croydon Safeguarding Children Board, in a phased approach.

The Partnership Early Help delivery model is shaped around three early help locality centres, working initially within the three localities established through the 'Best Start' early help provision, in the north, central and south areas of the Borough. These three centres provide a locality base for a range of practitioners supporting close collaboration and alignment of services, including the realigned Council intensive early help family key work teams, 'Best Start Family Solutions' service, who will work with partners delivering an integrated approach to our early help offer in the locality.

The role of the Partnership Early Help centres is to bring different services and agencies to work collectively to address local need and to provide a more coordinated and collaborative response to supporting children and families across Croydon. Professionals across the locality areas will be effectively identifying children and their families with problems, working out with the child and family what help is needed and bringing together and aligning different services to support the child and their family in a coordinated way, without the need for families being repeatedly assessed and needing to keep "telling their stories " .

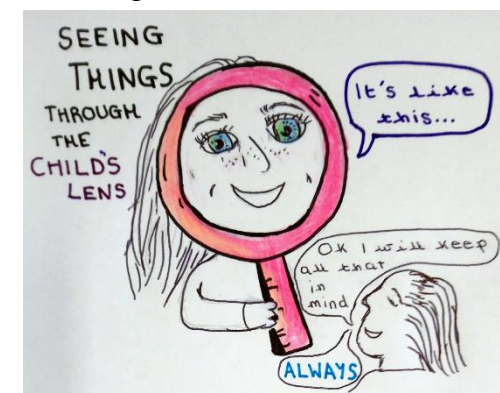
Within the localities the practitioners, collectively across all partner agencies, will have regular locality meetings and locality network events. The new collaborative approach to delivering early help will offer opportunities to share good practice, develop understanding and shape the future of the early help offer to support families across the locality. The localities delivery networks will help to facilitate a much stronger approach, collaboration and integration across universal and targeted services including schools, GPs, and other health services, police, voluntary, faith and community sector agencies and a wide range of Council services such as children centres, youth services, housing and community support services and children social care.

4. Guiding Principles

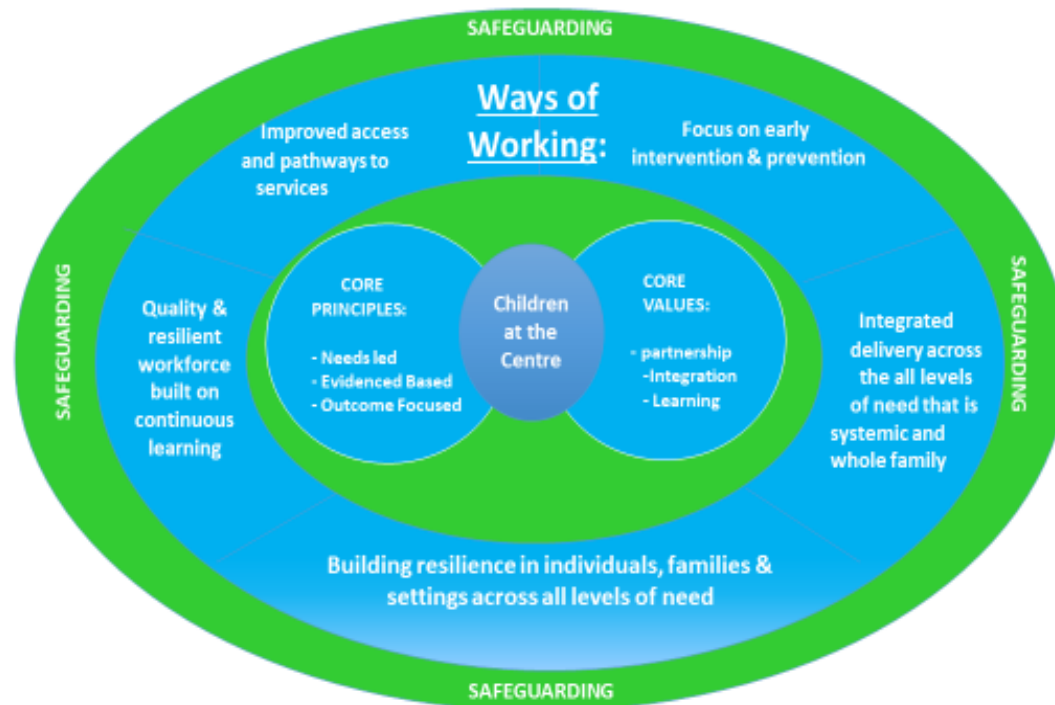
Problems may emerge at any point through childhood and adolescence. Early help is provided to prevent or reduce the need for statutory or specialist interventions, wherever possible and safe to do so. Early help seeks to meet the need, resolve the problem and prevent it becoming entrenched.

Within this context our early help approach is based on a set of shared principles:

- **Early help is everyone's responsibility.** All children and young people should have the opportunity to reach their full potential. Parents have the primary responsibility to meet the needs of their children and ensure the wellbeing and prosperity of their family. We recognise that parenting can be challenging and asking for help should be seen as a sign of responsibility rather than a parenting 'failure'. It is essential that when support is required, we **all act to provide the right help, at the right time, in the right way** to improve children's life chances and build resilience.
- **Wherever possible all children and families' needs will be met by universal services.** Universal services working with children and adults have a role to ensure children and their families are achieving positive outcomes, to be aware of potential difficulties and act early to prevent needs escalating. Universal services **must** remain involved even if a child is receiving additional, intensive or specialist support to ensure there is a joined up, whole system response to meeting needs.
- **Listen to children and families and treat them as partners.** In most cases it should be the decision of the parents when to ask for help or advice, although there are occasions when practitioners may need to engage parents actively and with their consent help them to prevent problems becoming more serious. All services must keep the child at the centre of the solution, encourage families to harness their own resourcefulness and build supportive community networks, thereby enabling families to develop resilience.
- **Our priority and focus is always the child – understanding their needs and ensuring their welfare.** All services for children and families will safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children and young people. Operating within the 'Effective Support – Right Help, Right Time' framework, skilled practitioners will work in an open, honest and transparent way with families and with each other, with the confidence to intervene and challenge when appropriate. We will ensure that children and their families are not subject of repeated assessments.



- **All services that work with children and adults must work together to deliver early help.** All services will work together with children and families to promote family strengths, build resilience, independence and support the transition from childhood to adulthood. This includes effective information sharing and joint working between professionals in children and adult services in order to reduce the impact that adults problems have on children's experiences and enable the opportunities greater integration can bring to the whole family.
- **Early help resources will be deployed through a locality model based on an understanding of the needs of children, young people and their families.** Services for children and families will be commissioned and delivered through a joined up, integrated locality model to ensure we can best understand the needs of children and their families within their communities and maximise our multi-agency resources using evidence based approaches, learning from feedback and the voice of the child and family, with robust performance management in effect to deliver positive sustainable impact and best value.
- **Ensure clear pathways to support.** We want all families to have easy access to support when needed. Pathways will be clear and we will set out clearly what support is available and make it easy for families to contact services themselves. We will deliver timely, high quality, effective, joined up support across the age range.



5. Our Priorities

Croydon's ambition is to move towards a new operating model focussing on prevention and early help. Over recent years Croydon has reviewed and adapted its early help and prevention strategy but the impact of these revised strategies has not been as far reaching as would have been hoped for and have not reduced demand on statutory and specialist services. Our children improvement plan commits to delivering an effective all age Partnership Early Help Offer, ensuring consistent application of 'thresholds' across the continuum of need and a more effective whole family, systemic locality based partnership approach to Early Help.

Analysis undertaken through a number of different forums and reviews completed over recent times along with the contributions of partners participating in the development of our Partnership Early Help Strategy identifies key factors that can increase vulnerability and lead to poor outcomes for children and families in Croydon.

Our early help priorities in the first two years to support the reduction in demand and impact on statutory services will be to prevent escalation, where safe to do so, to statutory and specialist services and to enable step down from statutory and specialist services to early help with a focus on working with families where the following predominant issues are present:

- Domestic Abuse
- Parental mental ill health
- Parental substance misuse
- Violence in the community affecting children and young people
- Emotional and mental health issues with children and young people
- Children at risk of exclusion from school or excluded from school
- Child neglect and abuse
- Housing and welfare supports for families
- Social isolation

➤ Children on the edge of care

We asked parents what they wanted from early help services:

Having someone who can help me and my family access other services

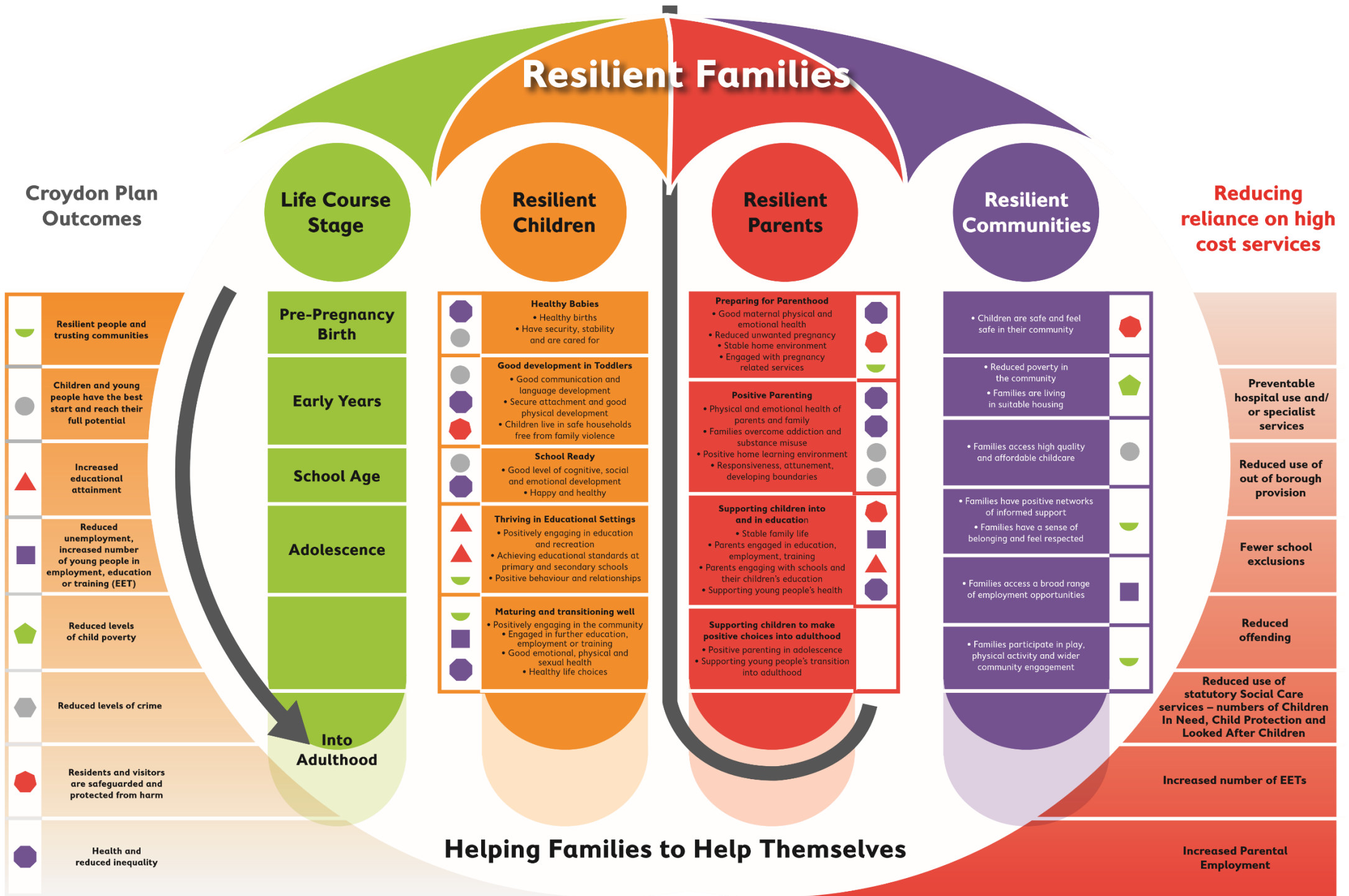
Crovdon Parent

'Help when I'm struggling with my mental health and a way to get me back on track'

Young single Mother

'I want my child to be able to get help when he needs it without us having to keep proving ourselves to new people – there are too many hoops to jump through – It is confusing'

Parent of a child on an EHC plan



Resilient families will be achieved by a partnership response to a whole system redesign of support to children, young people and their families, across the continuum of need, from pre-birth through to 18 years, using a consistent evidenced based approach to effectively build family and community resilience in Croydon. Focussing on early help and maximising the life chances for children and young people. This approach will shift the balance of service delivery towards earlier help and prevention, therefore improving outcomes and life chances for children and families, reducing demand on high cost statutory services and maximising the effective use of all available partnership resources.

6. Our Early Help Approach

Effective support through the 'Right Help, Right Time' framework describes the relationship between four levels of need; **universal, additional, intensive and specialist need.**



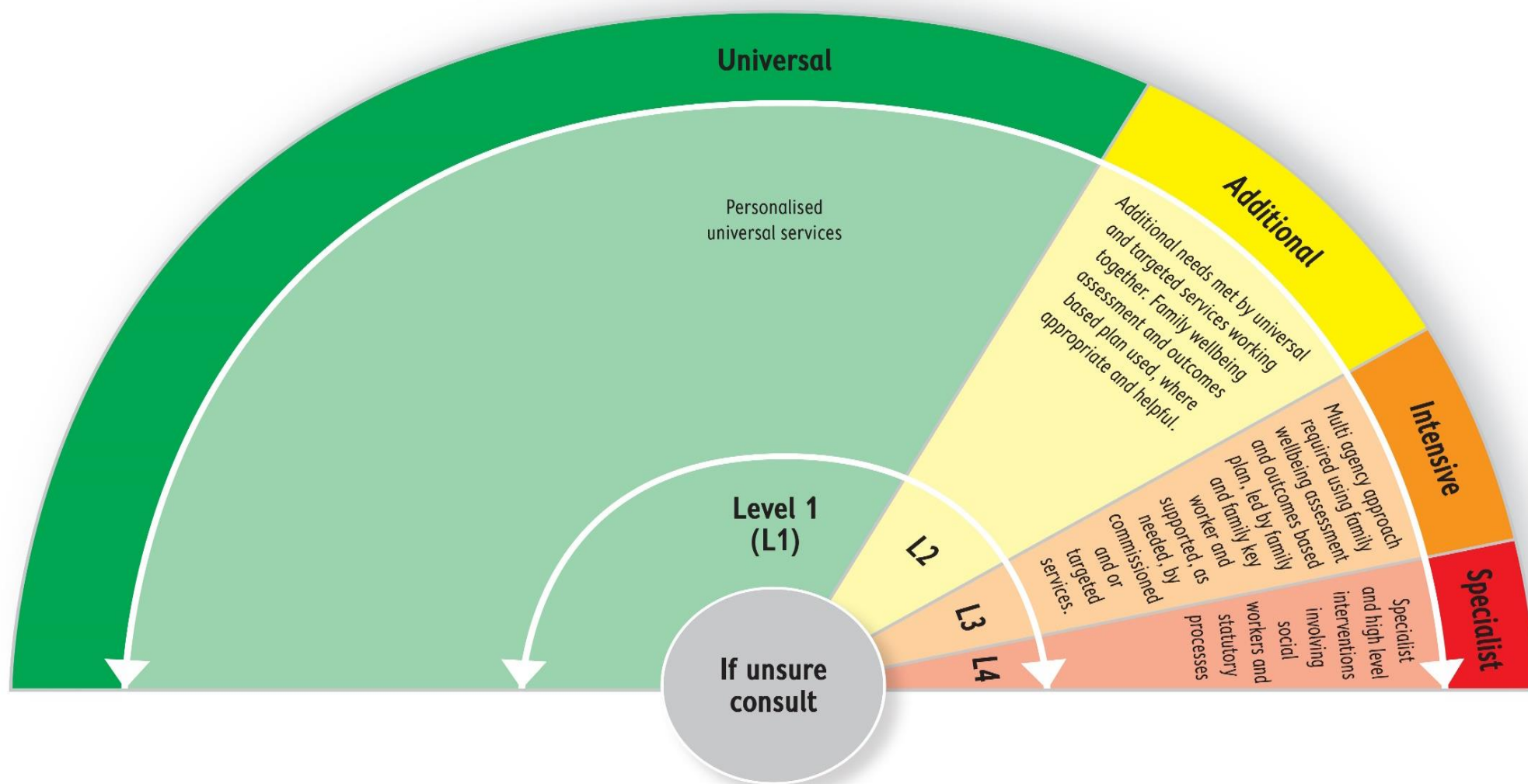
Effective understanding and application of these levels will ensure children and their families receive help early in the life of the problem. Practitioners should take an open and honest approach to supporting children and families. Professionals should always seek a parent's consent to share information to enable them to access the right support, unless to do so a child would be at risk of significant harm.

Universal – Most children and families will never come into contact with statutory or specialist services. The basic needs of all children can usually be met by their family, community and faith networks and universal services such as maternity services, health visitors, school nurses, GP practices, health care, early years, school and education settings, housing and youth services. Universal services are provided as a right to all children including our most vulnerable children and those with additional, intensive or specialist needs. These services are also well placed to recognise and respond when extra support may be necessary so that support is addressing family vulnerabilities early. This may be because of the child's changing developmental, health and wellbeing needs or because of parental or family circumstances.

Children with **Additional needs – Some children and young people are likely to need extra help to be healthy, safe and achieve their full potential due to their own needs or their family circumstance.** These children's needs are best supported by those who already work with them such as health professionals, children centres, school settings, organising additional support with local partners as needed. These services are also well placed to recognise and respond when extra support may be necessary so that support is addressing children and their family vulnerabilities early.

For some children, young people and families with **Intensive** needs a joined up, co-ordinated multi-disciplinary approach providing an intensive or package of support where the concerns can be managed without the need for statutory social work intervention or other specialist interventions. These needs are usually best led by a professional already known to the family. The lead professional will engage the family and other professionals to co-ordinate support through one *outcome based plan*. Where the support needed is **more than a lead professional can organise effectively or where support at an earlier level have not achieved the desired outcomes and concern for the child remains**, referral to the Council's realigned 'intensive' early help family case work locality teams – renamed 'Best Start Family Solutions' service can work with the child and family in a more intensive way.

Croydon Continuum of Need



All partners working with children, young people and their families will offer support as soon as we are aware of any additional needs. We will always seek to work together to provide support to children, young people and their families at the lowest level possible in accordance with their needs.

For some children and young people their needs are so significant that immediate **statutory social work or highly specialist intervention** is required to keep them safe, protect them from harm or serious risk to their health or welfare. These needs may emerge after a series of, or even despite targeted early help interventions, or be sudden and/or so serious as to require an immediate request for services. There will be concern that the child is likely to, or is suffering significant harm or developmental delay. Examples of specialist services include children social care, child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) tier 3 or 4 or the youth offending service.

Everyone working with children and families would need to utilise the four key steps to providing early help:

- SEE – identify that there is a possible issue, problem or need and find out more – from the child, young person, their parents, carers and other professionals and agencies who know the child, as necessary
- PLAN – assess the need and plan with the child, young person and their family, alongside other professionals as necessary, how best to meet that need
- DO – agree who will lead the plan, implement the plan together, commission or provide the service
- REVIEW – review progress, change the plan, change services or withdraw because the help is no longer needed

The Effective Support Right Help, Right Time framework Guidance for practitioners describes more details about the four levels of need and application of need and aims to achieve consistency in understanding and practice, when responding to children, young people and their families who need extra support.

Families, communities, universal, targeted and specialist support services must all work together effectively and efficiently to meet children's needs at the earliest point to prevent their needs escalating. Fundamental to this is placing the child at the centre of all we do and recognising that each child and family is individual and each family is unique.

Reaching decisions about levels of need and the best intervention requires discussion, reflection and professional judgement. All professionals should work together to provide support to children and their families at the lowest level possible according to their needs, but also be ready to respond if there is an escalation in the child's needs.

Universal services must remain involved even when more targeted or specialist services are working with the family. An effective early help offer along the continuum of need, involving a robust range of interventions to support families to meet additional or intensive need will ensure need is appropriately met and reduce the need for costly reactive services.

In Croydon we will continue to develop and embed a locality based whole family approach across all children and adult services. This approach recognises how problems that adults and children experience, for example, mental ill health, substance misuse and domestic abuse, can impact on the whole family and highlights the contribution that all agencies can make in ensuring services are provided to support sustainable improved outcomes and life chances. It means creating a different approach to engaging with families, working with families not 'to' them and fundamentally changing how organisations work together. This includes greater integration of local services, pooled resources, better systems for sharing information and recording, taking a whole family approach, and using a range of universal and targeted services to meet need.

We will, with our partners, develop our prevention and support services/interventions within the universal and early help offer, such as parenting, mentoring and domestic abuse programmes, taking into account those predominant key characteristics/issues evident in statutory and specialist services to enable us to intervene earlier, preventing escalation to specialist services. Additionally, we will further develop our universal and early help support services to take into account locality based needs as well as Borough wide needs. We will continue to monitor the impact of these supports and services to ensure we have the right supports/services available at the right time that make a difference.

We will also ensure that we share across the Council and with partners, communities and families in Croydon examples of good practice in addition to sharing knowledge of early help and prevention supports available. We will ensure that our ambition for all children is supported by a confident workforce with a common core of knowledge and understanding about children's needs and a consistent approach to practice.



7. Making a Difference – Partnership Early Help Outcomes Framework

A Partnership Early Help Outcomes Framework will be developed with performance indicators to measure outcomes for children, young people and their families, and enable us to measure the effectiveness and impact of the Partnership Early Help Strategy. It is anticipated that our Partnership Early Help Outcomes Framework will evolve over time as we implement our strategy. This framework will enable us to be confident of the effectiveness of our strategy and the impact this makes on supporting improvement of children services and improving life chances for children and their families by preventing issues becoming problems, 'Right Help, Right Time' thus reducing the levels of need for children and their families in specialist and statutory services.

Regular reporting on performance to strategic groups such as the Croydon Safeguarding Children Board, Children Improvement Board and within partners governing body groups will occur to enable monitoring of progress and impact of the Partnership Early Help Strategy.

The Partnership Early Help Outcomes Framework will include measuring the impact that the Partnership Early Help strategy enables:

A Good Childhood, for the Best Start in Life – parents have the confidence to raise their children to have a good childhood and reach their potential

- Early help reduces the need for statutory and specialist interventions
- Fewer children and young people are victims of crime including sexual exploitation
- Fewer young people are involved in crime and anti-social behaviour including gangs
- More children's parents/carers are in employment, education and employment
- Fewer families experience homelessness or living in unsustainable accommodation
- Fewer children and young people are subject to neglect or abuse
- Fewer children are affected by parental domestic abuse, mental ill health or substance misuse

A Great Education to give the best chance in Life – all children are eager to learn and confident in achieving their potential

- More children attend early years provision
- More children are 'school ready' and achieve a good level of development at the end of the foundation stage
- More vulnerable children achieve good levels at each key stage
- More children have regular attendance at school
- Fewer children are at risk of exclusion or excluded from school
- More vulnerable children are engaged in education, training and employment

The Best Health outcomes – all children achieve good health

- More babies and children survive infancy

- More babies are breastfed
- Fewer young people conceive or become parents
- More children and young people maintain a healthy weight
- More children and young people are fully immunised
- More children, young people and adults in their family sustain good emotional health and well being
- Fewer young people and adults in their family misuse substances
- More young people have good sexual health

Measuring the effectiveness of early help system – early help is an effective and proactive system in Croydon

- The Partnership Early Help Strategy is universally and consistently implemented across Croydon
- Partnership working is at the centre of all opportunities to support children and their families
- More evidence based and effective systemic practice interventions are used to effect sustainable change
- The workforce is skilled, competent and have taken up workforce development opportunities ensuring continuous learning

8. Early Help Delivery Model – priorities for 2018-2020

The Early Intervention Foundation in March 2014 developed an Early Help Maturity Matrix ². A mature level of early help is defined as **“all children and their families from groups that are a priority in a local area can access the support they need, when they need it. Outcomes for children, particularly those in ‘target groups’ who might otherwise not have done so well, are excellent and continuing to get better”**. (Early Intervention Foundations Maturity Matrix).

To ensure we have a mature early help system we need to transform the way professionals work with each other and with families, and to develop the right culture, systems and behaviours that support the delivery of the model across the partnership. The work of the Croydon Safeguarding Children Board and the Partnership Early Help Steering Group (formerly known as the Task and Finish Group) has developed the Partnership Early Help Strategy, and articulated a strong commitment by partners to transform and develop the right culture, systems and behaviours needed to have a mature early help system in place in Croydon.

We will through the Partnership Early Help Steering group evaluate the impact of the Partnership Early Help Strategy to ensure we are making a difference and are developing a mature early help system utilising the Early Intervention Foundation Maturity matrix.

The priorities for development during 2018-2020 are:

1. Establish Effective Leadership, Partnership Working and Governance

There are many positive examples of multi-agency working across Croydon to deliver good outcomes for children and their families and we will continue to expand on this to focus on developing more effective streamlined and joined processes. With partner commitment we will reenergise the Children and Young People Partnership Board (CYPP Board) – providing a multi-agency strategic leadership forum for Croydon’s children and their families. Delivery and accountability for this Partnership Early Help Strategy and the Partnership Early Help Outcomes Framework will move from the Croydon Safeguarding Children Board (CSCB) to this group once the CYPP Board has been fully re-established. The CSCB and later the CYPP Board will also have oversight of:

- Each partner agency’s response to implementation of this Strategy and its contribution towards other borough wide strategies such as the Croydon Safeguarding Children Board’s Neglect Strategy and Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy.
- Developing an effective outcome based performance management and quality assurance framework to measure impact.

² [Early Intervention Foundation Maturity Matrix](#)

2. Establish easy to use early help online information and advice

- In order to help children and their families and practitioners across the partnership to understand the wide range of information and services available we will build on the Croydon local offer website as a central portal to bring information together. This local offer website already provides information, advice and guidance to the public on a range of family issues, including support from partner agencies. Other online websites, advice centres, telephone helplines or supports and services not linked will be connected to this for the ease of families and practitioners.

3. Develop a suite of tools for early help practitioners to use – ensuring a whole family strength based consistent approach to working with children and families

- The Partnership Early Help steering group will develop an early help family wellbeing assessment and outcome based plan which will replace all other existing assessment and plans for early help and will become the single multi-agency family wellbeing assessment and outcome based plan for early help. It will align to the practice approach adopted already within Croydon of 'strengthening families' which will assist children, families and practitioners across all agencies by having a common approach to practice.
- To accompany the assessment and outcome based plan the Partnership Early Help steering group will develop a suite of early help tools to assist practitioners to understand the child and family journey, consistently monitor and review children's progress, evaluate the impact of support and interventions offered to improve outcomes and how to measure a family's engagement and their satisfaction level.

4. Develop effective and timely processes for sharing information between agencies

To enable early help to be more effective and ensuring the right help, at the right time, we will work with partners to remove barriers to effective working and ensure that families don't need to have a series of assessments or repeatedly 'tell their stories' before receiving the support they need

- Ensure we have in place clear information sharing arrangements
- Ensure we are making the best use of IT systems and portals across agencies and departments

5. Refresh structures and pathways that support the access to early help

The Partnership Early Help approach is embedded in the Effective Support Right Help, Right Time, Guidance for practitioners and will be available to all practitioners through the Croydon Safeguarding Children Board website.

- The Council's existing early help services in place, Best Start, Early Help Hub, Family Resilience Service (FRS), Parenting Hub and Family Functioning Team (FFT), will be realigned and renamed as 'Best Start Family Solutions' service'. Creating a locality based, systemic, family key worker (casework) service to work with children and families deemed as intensive need under the continuum of need, including children deemed on the edge of escalation to statutory services and those stepped down from statutory services. FFT will provide borough wide edge of care interventions for children and their families. Parenting programmes will continue to be provided for practitioners working with children and families open to both statutory and early help services.
- Locality based Partnership early help centres will continue to develop greater integration and alignment with communities and partner agencies, exploring co-location and/or coordination of processes with early years provisions, health visitors, schools, children and adult substance misuse services and emotional and mental health services
- We will work with commissioners and providers to ensure that the early help supports and interventions required in each locality and across the borough are developed in accordance with need and ensuring impact.
- The Partnership Early Help Steering group will develop and agree clear pathways to support access to early help and ensure children, families and practitioners have clear information on how to access early help.

6. Develop a skilled and competent workforce across the partnership

Delivery of early help requires effective working between professionals and between services including an understanding of each others role, responsibility, organisational culture and values. The Partnership Early Help Steering group governed, at this time, by the Croydon Safeguarding Children Board will develop a programme of multi-agency learning and development to strengthen and enhance the Partnership Early Help offer, to build on the delivery of evidence based practice. This includes:

- Awareness raising to ensure that the 'thresholds relating to risk across the continuum of need' are clearly understood and communicated between professionals so that families can move between early help and specialist statutory services at the right time and when required.
- Information sharing and conversations between professionals to identify families who would benefit from early help
- Implementing whole family approaches whilst keeping the child at the centre and undertaking strength based assessments of families including effective engagement and conversations with children and their families
- Holding and managing risk
- Working with difficult to engage families
- Embedding evidence based approaches and interventions across the partnership – including sharing good practice and developing online resources for practitioners

7. Develop a joint commissioning framework for early help

- Develop an approach that will encourage the development of services within our universal and early help offer across the partnership, through service redesign, reshaping specifications and identifying opportunities to recommission differently on a shared basis, or decommission/not recommission services that are not delivering to our identified needs. Ensuring a clear rationale for what services are required and how they should be delivered. A mixed economy model and trusted partners approach will be explored.
- Commissioning principles will ensure provisions are evidence based, outcome focussed and supported by robust data and analysis, focus on the needs of children and families, focus on prevention and early help, provide best value, sustainability and affordability for the future, collaborative with partners, commission across the life course of children and young people and offer opportunities for learning and innovation.
- Enabling, through established governance mechanisms, pooled resources to develop a broader joint commissioning framework across partner agencies to direct the commissioning intentions for early help whole family approaches and maximise best value.
- Develop an intelligence led approach to commissioning that draws together key public funding streams to develop a broader joint commissioning framework across partner agencies to direct the commissioning intentions for prevention and early help
- Ensure all stakeholders, including children and families, have a voice at every stage of the commissioning cycle and provide feedback to measure and review impact and enable redesigned services that better meet the needs of our children and families.

