

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EARLY HELP TO PROMOTE POSITIVE OUTCOMES FOR FAMILIES

WITNESS SUBMISSION

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1. Context

1.1 This witness statement is offered jointly by the above named officers. It is offered as a joint statement because the two officers in question have been jointly developing, alongside other colleagues and partners, an Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy which directly relates to the scope and objectives of this review. The statement will be accompanied by a presentation at the meeting which will summarise the context provided in this statement, whilst also providing an outline of the services which contribute to the early help agenda.

2. Statement Content

2.1 This statement provides the review with background and context for work undertaken to date in order to achieve the following vision for children, young people and families, as determined by the multi-agency Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy Group:

Hillingdon families are safe, healthy, prosperous and self reliant because they have the aspirations and means to succeed.

The Purpose of the Strategy Group

2.2 To develop strategy and practice on behalf of the Council and all partners in relation to early intervention and prevention which oversees workstreams focusing on prevention, early help, and intervention within the family. The need for a heightened focus on the provision of early help has been identified by a range of policy reviews, including Professor Eileen Munro's review of child protection. These reviews identified a growing body of evidence of the effectiveness of early help for children and their families.

Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy 2014 - 2015

2.3 An initial strategy was developed in 2014 - 2015. In addition to responding to national and local policy drivers regarding the provision of support for children, young people and families, it was informed by review work undertaken as part of the Children's Pathway Transformation Programme. The transformation programme undertook a range of 'discovery' activities in relation to services and processes which support children, young

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people and families. This discovery activity identified areas where changes to existing provision would be beneficial.

2.4 The diagram below (figure 1) illustrated the child/family pathway through many services offered throughout Hillingdon (based on age and thresholds of need) as identified during the transformation discovery work undertaken.

2.5 Hillingdon has a range of facilities and services that are part of everyday life including parks, libraries, schools, children's centres. These contribute to enabling families to flourish whilst also serving as environments whereby children and families potential need for 'early help' may be identified.

2.6 The review process identified that if additional needs are identified which the universal provision cannot cater for, the child or family may be referred to tier 2, targeted services. The child/family may then work with a tier 2 professional to address the additional needs. If further needs present themselves, the child/family may be referred once again to another service to address the presenting needs; this could be in tier 3, specialist services.

2.7 By this point the review identified that the child/family may have been referred to a variety of services for support. Having taken the family out of the universal provision, professionals can find it difficult to return them to the universal setting. This may be for a number of reasons, such as universal providers becoming disconnected with the journey the child/family has taken or the family finding it difficult to re-engage or 'step-down' from targeted support provided. The model below illustrates the risk of children and families becoming permanently disengaged from the universal arena.

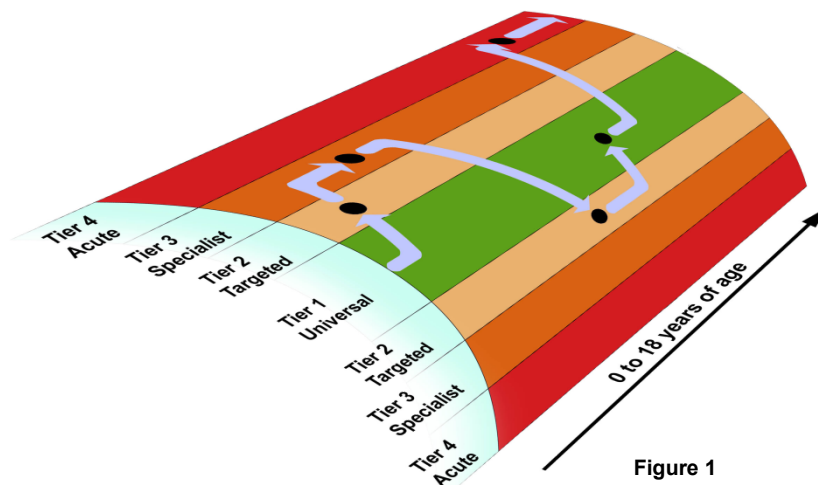


Figure 1

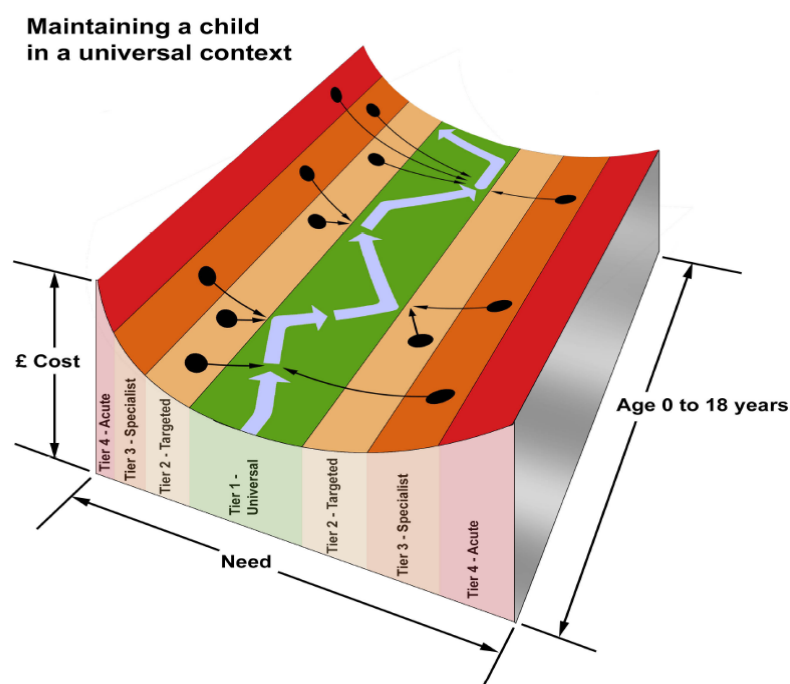
2.8 The following points serve as summary transformation review findings based on tracking family experience during the Children's Pathway Transformation discovery phase:

- Some families' problems escalate because agencies do not collectively and effectively respond to their needs early enough;

- The array of services available is complex and not always well co-ordinated, with different systems and definitions of need. Families can struggle to navigate their way to the support they require;
- A relatively small number of families with complex needs are responsible for a disproportionate amount of the workload of many agencies. These families do not always receive a joined up response to prevent and / or resolve the issues they face;
- Where issues are identified, services are sometimes too swift in seeking to refer the whole family on, when they could support the family, or individual members in it through their own service;
- Children and family services need to find new ways to work effectively together to ensure that problems and safeguarding risks for children, young people and families are identified early and that swift and co-ordinated interventions are made; and
- Children and families encountering difficulties can sometimes experience many independent service interventions overtime, several years in some cases, without problems being resolved.

2.9 Based on service review and discovery work undertaken a new conceptual model has been developed. The underpinning principle of this model (figure 2 below) is to maintain the child or family in the universal context as far as possible in order to avoid prolonged and entrenched disengagement and reliance on higher need services.

2.10 Within the revised model the intention is for the child and/or family to receive targeted support when necessary, yet remain within the universal context where possible. This approach seeks to avoid whole family migration to more costly services, when the additional need(s) are a relatively small component of the family's overall need.



2.11 In order to facilitate the delivery of the proposed operating model, a strong focus on early intervention and prevention has been advocated. The aforementioned model illustrates the emphasis on developing strong preventative services to avoid the need to escalate cases out of the universal context. It also emphasises the importance of early intervention in ensuring that suitable interventions are implemented at the earliest point of identification and that, where possible, these services should be coordinated or facilitated through universal provision.

2.12 The 2014 - 2015 strategy sought to deliver the required organisational change to strengthen the provision of early intervention and prevention services within the overall context of the Children's Pathway delivery model.

2.13 Delivery of operational objectives within the 2014 - 2015 strategy resulted in a number of structural and operational developments in response to the children's pathway transformation process. Key developments included:

2.14 An enhanced delivery model for Children's Social Care which includes an early intervention and prevention component. The revised model includes a new Early Intervention Service comprising the following;

- **Child and Family Development Services:** Securing and providing a range of early learning, childcare and family development services delivered through early years centres and children's centres;
- **Targeted Programmes:** Meeting the needs of families by securing and providing targeted programmes of developmental activity that enable children, young people and families to develop the behaviours, skills and capabilities to avoid or overcome problems and risks;
- **Key-working Services:** Meeting the needs of families by providing integrated 1-1 support and challenge to enable them to overcome problems including those identified within the terms of the Troubled Families programme, those concerned with school absence and non participation in education employment and training, and;
- **Youth Offending Services:** Meeting the needs of young people who have come to the attention of criminal justice agencies by delivering intervention and tracking services with a view to reducing the likelihood of further offending behaviour.

2.15 The development and introduction of Early Help Assessment (EHA) and Team around the Family (TAF) processes.

2.16 The EHA provides a tool for assessing family needs and issues in order to facilitate early intervention. The aim is to identify, at the earliest opportunity, where a family's needs are not being met and to provide timely and co-ordinated support to meet those needs. This will ensure that families access the right service at the right time and stop issues escalating unnecessarily.

2.17 The TAF is a multi agency meeting where all the professionals working with the family, including the parent/care and child(ren) where appropriate, explore what help is needed and how this can best be provided. At the first TAF meeting a lead professional is appointed to chair future meetings and be the central point of contact for TAF members, including the family.

Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy 2015 - 2018

2.18 Following the work progressed under the initial Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy a refreshed strategy is in the process of being developed. In addition to embedding the developments progressed under the 2014 - 2015 strategy the following work strategic outline has been developed:

Our Strategic Ambition

2.19 Our strategic ambition is to achieve the best for our families by maximising collective use of the public sector resources at our disposal across the Council, health services, police services, schools, criminal justice system and the third sector. Through doing so we will work together with families and communities to prevent problems arising in the first place or provide effective help to over-come difficulties at the earliest opportunity.

2.20 We will realise this ambition by modelling the following behaviours across our respective agencies at all levels:

Understanding together

Developing our collective understanding of the needs of our families and communities and the services that are in place in response - increased and shared understanding will enable more effective targeting of services and make the best use of available resources and expertise.

Planning together

We will respond to our understanding of need by jointly planning and commissioning services that are best placed to secure the outcomes we seek for our families. We will plan together at strategic and operational levels so that we may benefit from the rich and diverse range of knowledge and expertise across the partnership and ensure we avoid duplication of services.

Delivering together

We will develop a collaborative approach to meeting the needs of our families by bringing capacity and expertise together in order to maximise use of the professional resources available to us. Where there is a business case for doing so we will co-locate services and develop integrated practice in order to provide the best possible service to our families.

Learning together

We will foster a culture of shared learning across agencies so that we may base our planning and delivery on evidence of what activity services and approaches produce the outcomes we wish to secure with our families. We will also invest in learning about the each other and the respective assets and expertise we bring to our work with families. This will include joint workforce development activity and good practice sharing across the partnership.

Our Strategic Aims 2015 - 2018

2.21 Resilient children, families and communities bounce back and thrive despite the challenges they face. We aim to step in as required to help children, young people and their families who need assistance:

- So that problems don't arise in the first place (**prevention**).
- So that problems are nipped in the bud (**early intervention**).
- So that something is in place for needs or problems that are serious, will not respond to early help or will endure (**specialist and targeted intervention**).

Our Principles

2.22 The principles that underpin our work in Hillingdon are:

- **Working together with families and communities** to build knowledge, skills and capacity to enable them to thrive;
- **Putting children and families first** and at the centre of all we do by recognising that each family and child is unique, with differing and changing needs that are best assessed by understanding things from their perspective;
- **Focusing on families most in need of additional support** by being aware of those who need and would most benefit from help and swiftly connecting them to the support they require;
- **A 'tell us once' approach**. Listening, understanding and responding to what children, young people and families are telling us;
- Providing **timely, cost effective** and **outcomes focused** support. Stepping in when most likely to make a difference in a way that improves outcomes and reduces personal and financial cost;
- **Working collaboratively** in order to make best use of our resources by sharing information in a safe and timely way and working together to bring collectively capacity and expertise to bear in order to resolve a problem or risk; and
- **A 'no wrong door' approach** for children and families needing help. Developing an integrated approach to providing support so that agencies act as the gateway to a wider menu of services, if needed and professionals adopt the lead professional role by acting as a single point of contact and coordination for families as required.

Our Strategic Approach

2.23 We will adopt a 3 phase approach to realise our strategic ambition. The staged approach is informed by the need to fully embed the underpinning principles and behaviours required to jointly plan, commission and deliver services across the partnership.

Phase One 2015 - 2016

2.24 Phase one will focus on agreeing early intervention and prevention strategic direction, priorities and embedding principles across the partnership. It will also enable collective understanding of partner activity and seek to develop a planning framework to enable joint planning and commissioning of services.

Phase Two 2016 - 2017

2.25 Phase two will focus on joint planning and delivery of services. Activity will include joint needs assessment analysis, joint commissioning of services and integrated planning across partner agencies.

Phase Three 2017 - 2018

2.26 Phase three will see the bring together of phase one and two outcomes in a manner that leads to a fully integrated and mature approach to planning, delivering, evaluating and jointly commissioning early intervention and prevention activity across the partnership.

2.27 Work is being progressed to refine the content of the refreshed strategy prior to final consultation and implementation.