

KNOWSLEY'S
EARLY HELP STRATEGY
2017-2020



Knowsley Council

CONTENTS

3	FOREWORD
4	INTRODUCTION
5	EARLY HELP
6	KNOWSLEY PROFILE
8	VISION
10	PRIORITY 1 GIVE CHILDREN THE BEST START IN LIFE
12	PRIORITY 2 ENABLE HEALTHY AND INDEPENDENT FAMILIES
14	PRIORITY 3 ADOPT A FAMILY AND CHILD-CENTRED APPROACH
16	PRIORITY 4 MAKE SURE EVERYONE HAS A PART TO PLAY
18	PRIORITY 5 USE INTELLIGENCE AND INFORMATION BETTER
20	PRIORITY 6 ENSURE EFFECTIVE EARLY HELP SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES ARE IN PLACE

FOREWORD

Providing early help to children and families is a priority for Knowsley Council and all of its partners who have committed to ensuring children and families get the right help and support at the right time. We recognise that the impact of public sector funding cuts can be detrimental to some of our most vulnerable families and so the purpose of this strategy is to reinforce the importance that we all give to getting early help right for children and their families. This strategy outlines a series of key priorities that the Knowsley Children and Young People's Partnership is committed to over the next 3-4 years that will seek to ensure we have a strong, multi-agency and community focussed approach to early help.

Our strategy aims to create the conditions that build a culture of early help across the partnership. It sets out a series of clear commitments that each agency will strive to deliver in order to meet the priorities. Our aim is to reduce risk, improve outcomes and continue to reduce the demand for high cost services as well as enabling families to thrive and for **all** family members to reach their potential.

The Knowsley Children and Young People's Partnership will be responsible for driving forward this strategy but there will be additional scrutiny provided by the Knowsley Safeguarding Children Board to ensure the quality of our early help offer.

However, it is critical that there is recognition that early help is not the responsibility of one single agency, but is the responsibility of everyone who works with children and their families. That is why the successful achievement of our clear commitments within this strategy is reliant on a collective commitment to ensure children and their families receive the right help at the right time from the right person.



Paul Boyce
Knowsley Council
Executive Director
(Children's Services)



Councillor Joan Lilly
Knowsley Council
Children's Services
Cabinet Member



Kevin Wellens
Merseyside Police
Area Commander



EARLY HELP

INTRODUCTION

Whilst most children, young people and their families in Knowsley are able to have a good quality of life with minimal additional support from public services, there are some who find life more difficult for a variety of reasons. At different times in their lives, children, young people and their families in these circumstances may need additional support and help from universal, targeted and specialist services. There is national evidence that helping families as early as possible and providing support at the right time can reduce the likelihood of problems escalating (and the need for more serious interventions) and improve long term outcomes for children, young people and their families, enabling them to move on from difficulty and lead happier and healthier lives.

There is also evidence that not intervening early brings with it high costs to public services and a recent, widely recognised, estimate is that this could be as great as £17 billion annually (The Cost of Late Intervention, Early Intervention Foundation 2016). Most of this cost falls to local authorities and their partners and previous reports and reviews such as Munro, Marmot, Tickell, Allen and Field conclude that it is essential to prevent problems arising to reduce pressures on public services. Local authorities are operating within a climate of unprecedented challenge, with the demand for specialist services rapidly increasing whilst the available resources to provide these services are dramatically reducing. Early help and prevention helps to reduce the need for more specialist and acute services and therefore allows local authorities and other public sector organisations to manage their resources more effectively, thus relieving pressures on resources.

Knowsley's Early Help Strategy 2017-2020 reflects the North West Children's Improvement Programme Integrated Early Help Strategy and aligns with Knowsley's Children and Young People's Plan 2017-2020, the Council's Corporate Plan (2017-2020), the Strategy for Knowsley 2016-2020 and Knowsley's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2016-2020. The Strategy is intended to support and complement wider developmental priorities in Knowsley such as the Children's Social Care Improvement Plan and the Adult Social Care Early Intervention and Prevention Programme.

Early help is an approach, rather than a discrete service offer, which involves **all** partners sharing responsibility for intervening as early as possible to help those children, young people and their families at risk of experiencing poor outcomes. The emphasis is on preventing poor outcomes and to promote, positive, productive, healthy and fulfilling lifestyles. It refers to both help in the early years of a child or young person's life, including ante-natal interventions, and early in the emergence of a problem at any stage in their lives.

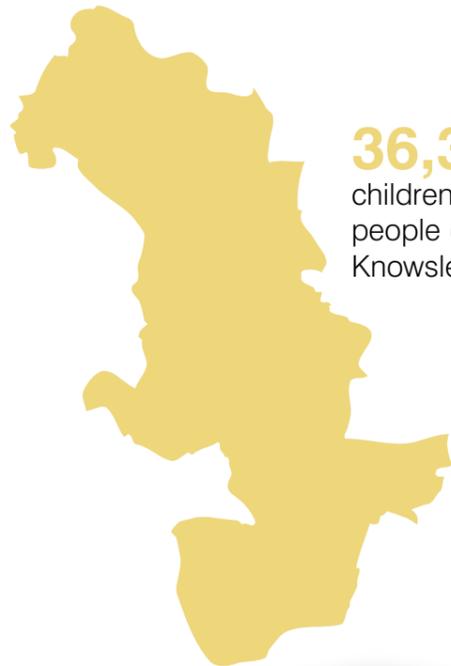
The Council has adopted the Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People's Service (C4EO) definition of early help which mirrors that of the North West Integrated Early Help Strategy:

“Intervening early and as soon as possible to tackle problems emerging for children, young people and families with a population most at risk of developing problems. Effective intervention may occur at any point in a child or young person's life.”

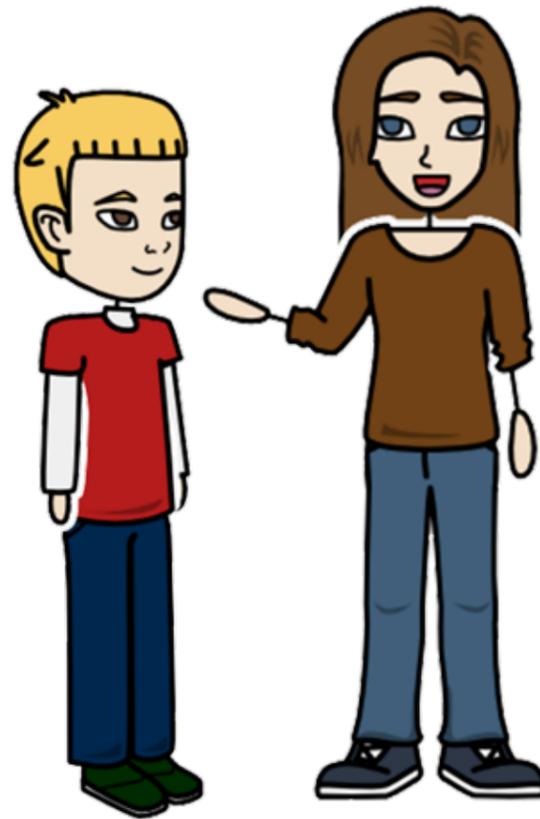
Early help involves partners, including the local authority, Youth Offending Teams, community rehabilitation companies, National Probation Service, Probation Trusts, police, adult social care, schools, mental health services, community and acute health services, children's centres, Youth Service, and the voluntary sector, working together to identify those at risk and ensuring processes and systems are in place and are effective in supporting children and families.

Effective early help must be a partnership with families based upon respectful engagement and a commitment to helping families find ways to help themselves. It must build upon strengths and encourage resilience and independence to equip people with the necessary skills to deal with adversity and set backs while seizing opportunities to flourish. It is also important that early help is challenging in order to ensure restorative practice is reflected. Early help should also situate families within the communities in which they live and encourage them to be productive members of their community while drawing on its assets and resources. Underpinning this will be the capacity of the social sector and universal services to promote positive behaviours and attitudes that can change cultures and lead to better outcomes for children and families.

KNOWSLEY PROFILE



36,342
children and young
people (0-19) in
Knowsley



30.6%
children in Knowsley in low
income families compared to
19.9% nationally



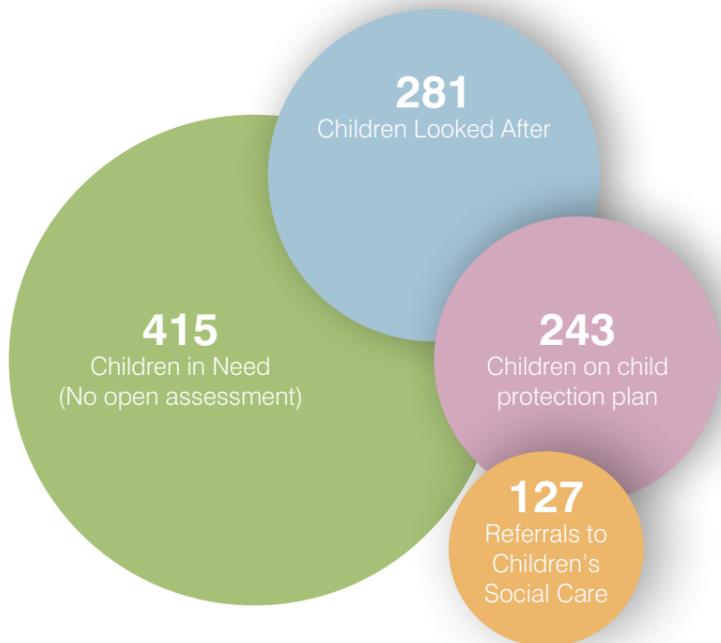
68.5%
working age adults in
employment compared to
73.8% nationally



19.4%
of pregnant mothers smoke
in Knowsley compared to
11.4% nationally



47.7%
of new mothers breastfeed
at initiation compared to
74.3% nationally



75 per month
Average incidents of domestic
abuse over the past two years
(2015, 2016)

2,010
families to be turned around



Knowsley's target for Troubled Families
Programme (2015-2020)



VISION

Knowsley's Early Help Strategy will work to achieve the strategic vision of the Children and Families Partnership as set out in the Children and Young People's Plan 2017-2020:

“Knowsley - a place where all our children have the best start in life, where every family thrives and where all our young people aim high and achieve their potential”

The strategy will assist in achieving the borough's long-term vision to make Knowsley 'the borough of choice by 2023'. It will help to deliver the Strategy for Knowsley priority 'children and families' and to ensure that our borough provides the right conditions to allow children and families to thrive and reach their potential.

In supporting this vision, we have set out a number of long term outcomes that will enable us to achieve our commitment to delivering effective early help as a partnership:

Outcomes:

- Families will know how to access services
- Our universal offer will be right and families will access it
- Families will raise and achieve their aspirations for employment, education and training
- Families will manage their good health and prevent illness
- Families will be empowered, self-reliant and reduce dependency on the public sector

In order to achieve these outcomes, we will focus on the following priorities:

- Give children the best start in life
- Create healthy independent and resilient families
- Adopt a family and child-centred approach
- Make sure everyone has a part to play
- Use intelligence and information better
- Ensure effective early help systems and processes are in place

Fundamental to the delivery of this strategy will be the co-operative principles which underpin much of the work that we will carry out to support children, young people and families. These principles are:

- Community leadership
- Partnership and co-operation
- Retaining jobs and investment locally
- Building social value
- Empowering residents to take an active role in communities

Prevention and early intervention as well as behaviour change are emerging policy drivers that cut across these principles and will help to drive the delivery of this strategy. In Knowsley behaviour change relates to implementing a suite of techniques across services to help people to change their behaviour using the MINDSPACE framework.



PRIORITY 1 GIVE CHILDREN THE BEST START IN LIFE

The Marmot review emphasised the importance of giving every child the best start in life to reduce health inequalities across the life course. The foundations for virtually every aspect of human development - physical, intellectual and emotional - are set during pregnancy and early childhood. The 1001 Critical Days, a cross party manifesto, acknowledges the importance of the 1001 critical days from when a baby is conceived until age two and highlights that what happens during these early years has lifelong effects on many aspects of health and wellbeing, educational achievement and economic status. The manifesto finds that this period of life is crucial to increase children's life chances and highlights the importance of acting early to enhance the outcomes for children. A number of recommendations for local services are made throughout the manifesto and it is essential that these are recognised in our policy and practice and that we work with parents to ensure they are aware of the central role they have in making sure that children start well and grow well through childhood, adolescence and into adulthood.

- We will ensure universal services are promoting healthy living and attitudes
- We will review and strengthen our programme of evidence-based parenting programmes across all age ranges

Starting Well - A healthy, happy start

We want new and experienced parents to ensure that their children start well and are born into healthy and happy environments. We want to encourage women to stop smoking and drinking during pregnancy, to breastfeed their babies and for both mothers and fathers to understand the importance of developing strong attachments with their children from birth. Universal services have a significant role to play in promoting healthy living and positive behaviours, such as stopping smoking, helping to improve and support emotional wellbeing and mental health, as well as promoting positive parenting for new parents who need advice and support. The principles of behaviour change could have valuable application in encouraging people to adopt a healthier lifestyle and increase independence.

Growing Well - Building on the strengths in our early years

As well as giving children a healthy start, we want all Knowsley children to grow well in their formative years. We recognise that parents are children's first educators and we want them to be fully aware of the crucial role that they can play in their child's early learning and to be enthused and empowered to carry out that role effectively. Our early year's provision is currently playing a vital role in supporting and nurturing children and we want to build on the successes within our childcare settings, promoting them widely to increase the uptake across the borough, particularly in relation to the two year old childcare offer. We also want to continue to develop our childcare provider market so that we can meet potential future demands so that no child loses out.

Supporting children's learning

We believe it is important that parents take an active role in supporting their child through their early years. Parents are also pivotal in ensuring that their children succeed as learners throughout their lives in school. We want parents to feel empowered to support their child's learning and to feel educated about how to encourage positive learning for their children. We want our schools and childcare providers to work in partnership with our parents so that collectively we can help children to achieve their potential.

- We will continue to promote and increase uptake of the two year old childcare offer and continue to develop the market to accommodate potential future demand

- We will support parents to become more involved in their children's learning and in shaping the educational offer in our schools



PRIORITY 2 ENABLE HEALTHY AND INDEPENDENT FAMILIES

Positive emotional wellbeing and mental health

Poor mental health amongst adults has a detrimental impact on children's lives, particularly in terms of its association with risks and risk taking behaviours such as alcohol / substance misuse and domestic abuse. Given the propensity of domestic abuse in Knowsley and how this can be detrimental on families' health and independence, we want to strengthen our response to this issue, particularly in relation to the impact that this can have on children's wellbeing and mental health.

Adolescence, the transition from childhood to adulthood, can be a difficult time for young people and their families and can impact on emotional wellbeing and mental health. During adolescence some young people may carry out risk taking behaviours, such as experimenting with drugs and alcohol, which can present further risks to their wellbeing, for instance making them vulnerable to child sexual exploitation.

We believe that we should use our community assets to promote and embed positive emotional wellbeing and mental health amongst all Knowsley residents. We want to work in partnership with the community and social sector to enhance local networks of support, utilising digital platforms more effectively and explore new and innovative ways to bring about positive mental emotional wellbeing and mental health. We will explore innovative ways of enabling young people and adults to improve their emotional wellbeing and mental health.

Education and learning

Part of our approach to improving mental resilience is about making people more independent and empowered to take control of their lives. We believe that providing more learning opportunities for residents will enable them to do this by developing new skills, confidence and self-esteem, thereby helping them to gain access into employment and become more financially and socially independent. We will need to ensure that learning opportunities are accessible, tailored and responsive to the needs of our residents, so that all Knowsley residents feel confident and empowered to learn. For example, it is important to ensure that young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and those children who are looked after, have the same aspirations to everyone else and that support services are personalised to ensure that they raise individual ambitions and promote independence.

Employment

In addition to learning, we want to ensure that all adults in Knowsley, who have the potential for economic activity, including those who are furthest from the workplace, are supported into training and work. We recognise that child poverty is an influencing factor that can lead to a reliance on services and the need for more serious interventions by specialist services. Therefore, we want to optimise employment opportunities and maximise family incomes, bringing children out of poverty and thereby improving their life chances.

- We will work with partners to ensure the provision of a programme of lifelong learning opportunities that will engage and meet the needs of all our residents from leaving school to throughout adulthood

- We will use our employment support teams across our partners to promote the development of new skills which directly increase opportunities for economic activity and independence that are matched to the labour market and growing local economy
- We will continue to work with local authority colleagues and external partners to develop supported employment opportunities for Knowsley residents



PRIORITY 3 ADOPT A FAMILY AND CHILD-CENTRED APPROACH

As well as changing behaviour and improving long term outcomes for children and adults, we need to ensure that when we intervene early we do it at the right time and the right way so that families and children feel fully involved in any decisions that are taken.

Voice of the child and the family embedded in early help commissioning and design

We need to incorporate the views and experiences of children and families themselves in the design, delivery and commissioning of services so that we can provide greater quality services which ensure that people have a positive experience and feel that things have improved for them. The voice of the family and crucially the child therefore needs to be incorporated within all stages of the early help offer across the continuum of need.

- We will ensure that the voice of the child and the family is embedded in early help, and the commissioning and design of services

Working *with* families and not doing *to* or *for* families

Equally important will be the need for children and families to experience both support and challenge (as appropriate) when working with services so that motivation and responsibility are reinforced within the cultures of families and also within the partners supporting them. This requires honest and respectful engagement based upon the 'restorative' principle of working *with* families rather than doing *to* or *for* them. It also requires partners to recognise that families are central to identifying, defining and addressing their own strengths and needs and must be supported to do so by partners who are willing to hear the voice of the child and the family and reflect on the function and purpose of their own practice and policies so that these do not become a barrier to change.

- We will promote a restorative, person-centred approach to developing relationships within families and between families and partners to develop empathy, trust and respect as means to find solutions through collaboration



PRIORITY 4 MAKE SURE EVERYONE HAS A PART TO PLAY

We want to ensure that all of our partners who are involved in working with children and families have a part to play in identifying and delivering effective early help.

- We will explore opportunities for integrated commissioning and capacity building across the partnership to improve outcomes for children and families

Shared vision, outcomes and accountability

We want all partner organisations involved in providing early help to take full responsibility and ownership for improving outcomes for children and young people. We want all partners to recognise the value and benefits that early help and prevention offers in reducing demand for services and in improving long-term outcomes for children and their families. In order to ensure a joined up and consistent approach to early help is delivered, we want all partners to sign up to our collective vision, long-term outcomes, take shared responsibility for delivering outcomes and to come together to evaluate and monitor effectiveness and identify where improvements can be made.

Shared commitment and understanding of early help

We want everyone involved in working with children and families to be clear of their role in the early help system and for their workforce to have the confidence and support to make judgements on the level of need of a child or family. This means taking a whole system approach to early help where all partners are committed to addressing the needs of families whether their need falls within their immediate area of professional expertise or not. We want all partners to commit to identifying need and to taking a lead in tackling emerging problems in the lives children and families at the earliest opportunity.

Shared delivery

We want to explore ways in which some early help services could be delivered, building on our community assets and working in partnership with the social sector. This would help to ensure that prevention is embedded within the community and is more sustainable. Third sector partners, including community groups and volunteers, have an important role in reaching local communities and supporting families and it is important that there is further collaborative working, which maximises the third sector's contribution and its ability to provide additional resource. The principles of behaviour change play an important role in encouraging our community assets and organisations to deliver the early help offer. For example, encouraging our partners to become the lead professional for children and families and encouraging them to carry out quality early help assessments to identify children at risk or in need sooner

- We will promote a common Team Around the Family (TAF) approach based upon good early help assessment and a lead professional role. This will be widely recognised and adopted by all partners including schools and health services to ensure that interventions to prevent and tackle interrelated problems are joined up
- We will work in partnership with the third sector and other partners to maximise their contribution



PRIORITY 5 USE INTELLIGENCE AND INFORMATION BETTER

- We will use intelligence and indicative data to target support earlier and more efficiently

Using insight and intelligence to identify need

We have access to information and intelligence which can help us to identify and target specific communities that are most at risk of developing problems in the future. It is important that we use this information more effectively as part of our approach to identifying need at the earliest opportunity. This will enable us to focus the delivery of our services and our early intervention approaches to these specific communities, utilising universal services to offer appropriate support. This approach would help to ensure that problems are prevented from occurring in the first place and / or escalating in the future.

Effective information sharing

We know that we can support families better if we share data and information more effectively. There are a range of different data sharing agreements in place which will be applied, for example those within the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and around the Safer Knowsley Partnership. We want to ensure that we are sharing information in the most effective way, particularly with partners, and exploring opportunities to break down barriers that organisational systems create. Under the National Troubled Families Programme legal gateways have been established to share data and these need to be applied in the early help setting. There also needs to be a more established culture around data sharing that enables this to happen in an appropriate and effective way.

- We will promote a common approach to case recording and assessment in early help with consent from families to ensure better, more timely information sharing which prevents them having to tell their story multiple times, this includes developing family support plans with the family



PRIORITY 6 ENSURE EFFECTIVE EARLY HELP SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES ARE IN PLACE

- We will provide access to a common IT solution (early help module) to partners to encourage a graduated approach to addressing need in families which accords with the Knowsley Continuum of Need document and its threshold descriptors and embed early help identification and assessment within all partners
- We will provide ongoing training and support to partners delivering early help to strengthen existing practice and develop new innovative ways of working

No wrong front door to early help

We want families to be able to find help at the right time when they need it. Services should be easy to engage with and easy to find so that people have no difficulty getting the help that they need when they need it. There should be no wrong front door to early help. Families should be helped to identify what help they need and where this will come from, regardless of the services they present to. All partners working with children and families should therefore have an understanding of early help and how and where to access it. We also need to be proactive in promoting services directly to families so that they can access them themselves.

Skilled workforce that understands the importance of early help

A highly skilled, professional early help workforce is critical. To ensure that early help is effective, practitioners need to be valued, their roles understood and have the skills and confidence to meet the challenges of working with children, young people and their families in difficult circumstances. We want professionals to be confident and competent in identifying need, assessing risk and have a clear understanding of the thresholds for intervention. We will therefore ensure that practitioners have access to tools which support effective practice, such as The Graded Care Profile, Domestic Abuse Risk Identification Matrix and person-centred planning. They will also have access to meaningful and relevant training which supports professional development, utilising professional experience and expertise across the system including peer mentoring and support.

Seamless pathways of services and intervention

Children and families should experience seamless pathways on their journey through support and provision. Entry and exit from services providing support for families with complex additional needs should be straightforward, particularly in relation to those who no longer meet the criteria for specialist services. We need to ensure that our assessment and referral processes are clear and that 'step-up/step-down' arrangements are coherent and subjected to quality assurance protocols. We will look at the relationships between services and interventions and redesign these as required to ensure they are seamless from the families perspective and respond to the needs and risks identified. This will be ongoing service transformation to ensure that early help services remain agile and fit for purpose. Progress on this will be measured in part via the troubled families maturity model. For children and their families who may need support from adult social care through the Transition process into adulthood, early referral and support will allow for aspirational outcomes to be identified and worked towards. This will be further developed and measured in the Transition Strategy.

- We will continue with senior management oversight of 'step-down' arrangements from Children's Social Care and the progress of contacts through MASH
- Quality Assurance processes for support delivered at Level 3 and Level 2 will identify and address the appropriateness of thresholds and whether families are being supported in the right way

