Bristol Early Help Strategy 2019–2021
We believe that children in Bristol should receive support at the earliest opportunity to enable them to thrive. We will act together to enable families in Bristol to receive the right support at the right time from services that work well together.

The majority of children and young people in Bristol grow up in a nurturing home, in a family setting with supportive communities and become independent, resilient adults. Wherever possible we want families to be able to support themselves by engaging with and contributing to their local communities. Most do, but there are some children, young people and families who need help to do so. This is a shared responsibility and requires a whole city approach.

In Bristol we have a shared framework known as the Bristol Multi Agency Threshold Guidance for all our work with children and families. This Early Help strategy is also linked to our Children, Young People and Families Strategy and relates to a number of other strategies because it takes a whole system approach to improving local partnerships and supporting agencies who are putting early intervention into practice.

Early Help\(^1\) is not a team but a system wide approach to early intervention based on improving the part played by local partners who are responsible for putting early intervention into practice. Preventative and Early Help responses are critical to preventing issues escalating and children experiencing further harm. Early Help seeks to meet the needs of and support the family in resolving difficulties and prevent them becoming entrenched. Trusted relationships are at the heart of making a difference to how we solve social issues today\(^2\).

Our aim is to make sure children, young people and families’ needs are supported at the earliest opportunity and continue to be supported by the relevant services for as long as is required. The level and type of support will vary in order to achieve the desired outcomes. Early Help plays a vital role in responding when concerns are first identified and refers to the support that children, young people and families can expect in response to the identification of additional needs.

Universal services are well placed to identify needs and support children and families at this early stage. They know children and families best and can use their relationship with children and families to help affect change. They must remain involved even if a child and family go on to receive targeted or specialist support as this will help ensure that there is a whole system response to meeting needs and achieving agreed outcomes. Universal services will provide the consistency needed by the child and family.

Our improvement priorities for Early Help are intended to ensure we identify and respond to children's needs effectively and that there is a timely response that makes best use of expertise and resources from across organisations from all areas of the city. Children and families should receive effective and proportionate interventions which improve their situation. This strategy sets out six key priority areas, each an important part of an integrated prevention and early intervention system for families: Family Focus; Leadership; Planning; Culture Change; Workforce Development and Delivery.

The improvement priorities have been identified by partners through a participative process of self-assessment and have drawn on evidence of good practice and what works in Early Help.

In three years we want this strategy to make a real impact for children who have suffered adverse childhood experiences leading to resilient families with improved life chances.

\(^1\) 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.

\(^2\) This systems approach should focus on:
- growing system capability for trusted relationships at a local level
- supporting the development of consistent, high-quality mentoring for vulnerable young people
- enabling effective implementation and evaluation, focusing on workforce behaviour and organisational culture on relational practice, and measurement that adds to the UK evidence-base.

Building trusted relationships for vulnerable children and young people with public services, EIF, 2018
What’s working well?

Bristol has established a strong partnership of agencies who are working together to play their full role in responding to the needs of the whole family using strengths based, solutions focussed approaches. For example, 81 cross sector managers have completed multiagency manager pathway training and 120 practitioners completed the multiagency whole family worker pathway since March 2016.

We have improved our ‘front door’ (First Response and Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)) to ensure that enquiries are directed to the right agency and reduce unnecessary referrals to Early Help services.

We have restructured our Early Help offer to better align resources and improve integrated working across localities. Our Families in Focus teams have the capacity to work with 750 families a year. In addition, six dedicated Social Workers, nine parenting practitioners, five Mental Health specialists (adults and children) and three Independent Domestic Violence and Abuse workers provide information, advice and guidance to support a universal ‘plus’ service for partners and direct work for families as part of an ‘Integrated Locality’ approach.

We have a 10 year city wide programme to improve mental health and wellbeing in Bristol called ‘Thrive’ which focuses on prevention and early intervention with initiatives that range from improving the whole population’s wellbeing to interventions for people experiencing mental illness.

- Youth offending and first time entrants to the Youth Justice System are reducing.
- Outcome targets in Family Outcome Plans have been met or exceeded.
- Percentage of children achieving a good level of development at Early Years Foundation Stage has improved from 66.3% last year to 67.7% (still below the National Average, but the highest we have been).
- Percentage of pupils achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and maths at KS2 at 61% is directly in line with the National Average and 7% points better than the previous year (south west average was 60%).
- Percentage of Nursery Education rated good or better by Ofsted remains constant at 100% (the National Average is 98%).
- Overall employment rate of working age population continues to be strong in Bristol at 77.6%, giving stability to the general economy and wellbeing of families.

We have dedicated Police Community Support Officers in schools and we have developed our Child Sexual Exploitation response and vulnerability risk modelling to enable us to target those at risk at an earlier stage.

Job-Centre Plus is co-located with local authority housing services, designing new pathways for supporting unemployed adults and families.

Third sector partners engage with local authority and statutory services as part of our integrated localities with a focus on service transformation.

Bristol Children's Safeguarding Board (BSCB) issued new guidance and a framework for working together (May, 2018) which provides greater clarity. This supports a culture where services and practitioners work effectively with each other to meet the needs of children and their families by enabling staff to develop behaviours, skills and knowledge for greater mutual respect, trust and cooperation. All BSCB training supports the signs of safety approach used across the partnership in Bristol.
3 What are we worried about?

Services for children, young people and families need to work together to ensure they are consistent and effective in meeting the needs of families with multiple and complex needs; we want to support more young people to live safely and within their family and reduce the numbers of teenagers entering care. We want to reduce the number of children in care who are placed out of the city and reduce social care caseloads in order to enable our practitioners to work purposefully with families to effect change. Our universal services need to grow in confidence to be able to support families when they have emerging needs. We need to continue to develop the use of our data and intelligence to identify families most in need and align the right resource.

Early Help service level data

- 368 children and family members with a current risk indicator are open to Early Help and/or Social Care
- 840 children and family members with a current risk indicator have been open to Early Help and/or Social Care (including the 368 currently open), since Sept 2013
- Current re-referral rate: Social Care 22%, Early Help family support 20%.

Population level data

- 54,000 families; and 13,993 have two or more social issues (data from May 2018).
- We are below the national average for school attendance (currently 94.4%) and above average for fixed term and permanent exclusions. Exclusions: 154 citywide, 61% of these are in the South of Bristol (Fixed term).
- We have the highest level of young people who are not in education, employment and training in Core Cities.
- In Bristol it is estimated that at least 2500 children aged 2-5, 5100 children aged 5 – 16 and 1700 16 wand 17 year olds have a mental health problem (Bristol JSNA Chapter 2017 – CYP Emotional and Mental Health and Wellbeing).

Adverse Childhood Experiences

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are traumatic events that occur before the age of 18 and affect children while growing up. ACEs have an impact throughout life in terms of physical and emotional health and wellbeing. In Bristol we are committed to improving outcomes for children and families and want to break the cycle of ACEs. Bristol is developing a city wide approach to this and the Early Help system will be integral to this.

1 Physical abuse
402 Children with an assessment in the last 12 months where physical abuse was recorded

2 Sexual Abuse
139 allegations of child sexual abuse in the last year in Bristol

3 Emotional Abuse
It has not been possible to extract separate data for any indicators of emotional abuse.

4 Emotional Neglect

660 children in care (April 2018) of whom:
- 8.27% Physical abuse
- 3.02% Sexual abuse
- 45.97% Emotional abuse
- 9.53% Neglect

Annual cost of looked after children is £16.8 million pounds
5 Living with someone who abused drugs
Successful completions of clients in treatment who live with children under the age of 18:
- 628 Opiate
- 50 Alcohol and non-opiate
- 51 Non-opiate

8 Living with someone who was incarcerated
The full extent of families affected by parental imprisonment is not understood; most people don’t have a release address. Probation do not currently share this information and data quality from the prisons is poor.

9 Living with someone with serious mental illness
The full extent of families affected by poor mental health is not understood due to availability of health data.
There are 2075 children with a Special Educational Need where the need is social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) and an additional 1000 where a lead professional working with a family has identified an adult or a child with a mental health need.

10 Parental loss and separation through divorce, death, abandonment or entry to care
Risk; the full extent of families affected by loss is not understood and can only be identified at an individual level.

6 Living with someone who abused alcohol
850 adults receiving support for alcohol misuse.
In the last year, 3300 adults receiving support for drug and alcohol misuse.
It is estimated that 83% of adults in Bristol that are dependent on alcohol are not receiving help or treatment.
Successful completions of clients in treatment who live with children under the age of 18: Alcohol – 134.

7 Exposure to domestic violence
Domestic violence costs Bristol £26 million pounds per year.
There are 9000 families with a victim of domestic violence in the last year, of which 41% were in the south area.

628 Opiate
50 Alcohol and non-opiate
51 Non-opiate

2700 adults receiving support for drug abuse

6 Living with someone who abused alcohol

8 Living with someone who was incarcerated

9 Living with someone with serious mental illness

10 Parental loss and separation through divorce, death, abandonment or entry to care

4 Someone who has been identified of being at heightened risk of a number of factors including Child Sexual Exploitation, Domestic Abuse or becoming a repeat missing person.
5 Data source from April 2018 when Early Help was renamed Families in Focus
6 For example – Crime or anti-social behaviour, children not attending school regularly, children who need help, adult out of work or young people at risk of worklessness, families affected by domestic violence and abuse, a range of health problems.
7 Refers to eight cities within England that have been designated “core cities”, forming a network of major regional cities
8 The Public Health England survey “What About YOUn?” reported that in Bristol 55% of children had been bullied, 16.5% reported low life satisfaction and 47.3% regarded themselves to be the right size. (PHE, 2015)
Our goal is that families will be able to ask for help from universal services when they encounter difficulties and these services will support the family in resolving those difficulties to prevent them becoming entrenched.

The actions we have identified are intended to develop a whole systems approach to improving local partnerships and making sure children and families’ needs are supported at the earliest opportunity.

We have identified actions below, related to the six priority areas from our Local Area Service Transformation Maturity Model Action Plan. These priorities are intended to achieve this goal.

**Priority 1: The Family Experience**

**Outcome:** Families know how to access information advice and guidance and receive seamless support from integrated services.

We will:

- Publish an online Early Help offer for services to provide families with the information they need
- We will listen to children, young people and their families to understand their strengths and worries to ensure assessments and interventions are meaningful and families get the outcomes they need. We will routinely ask for feedback and use this to ensure families are receiving appropriate support from integrated services.

**Priority 2: Leadership**

**Outcome:** Senior leaders from across the city demonstrate a common purpose in leading, designing and delivering services to meet the needs of families.

We will:

- Ensure that strong service management and governance delivers accountable services across the partnership by measuring and reporting on our joint performance. We will use our shared knowledge and intelligence to focus on identified needs and gaps.
- Develop an allied commissioning response to specific cross cutting issues and commission strategically based on identified need with a focus on outcomes.

**Priority 3: Strategy**

**Outcome:** There is a shared vision and strategy for Early Help in Bristol which is underpinned by a multiagency delivery plan.

We will:

- Embed a strengths based framework of practice across the partnership that promotes resilience and increases awareness of the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences.
- Review and update the Early Help Service Transformation Maturity Model local area action plan.

**Priority 4: Culture**

**Outcome:** The workforce across services for children, young people and families can articulate a shared vision for Early Help and understand their role in delivering it.

We will:

- Promote and embed our shared vision for Early Help and a resilience based approach to work with families.
- We will promote a learning and improvement culture through multiagency training and opportunities such as Multi-Agency Network Meetings for staff groups to come together, recruitment, reflective practice, supervision and Continuous Professional Development.

**Priority 5: Workforce Development**

**Outcome:** The Early Help system is underpinned by an integrated, skilled and knowledgeable workforce that is multidisciplinary, diverse, and able to meet the needs of children and families.

We will:

- Have a cross sector (including Early Years, SEN, Health & Schools) workforce development plan (including shadowing) that will enable delivery of integrated locality arrangements and ensure high quality interventions for families.
- We will provide opportunities for multiagency reflective practice and raise awareness of the benefits of this, encouraging services working with Children, Young People and families to adopt this approach.
Priority 6: Delivery Structures and Processes

Outcome: Area teams are integrated across disciplines and organisations; they deliver consistent evidence-based interventions and use shared information, assessment, prioritisation, and case management systems.

We will:
• Further develop our integrated locality arrangements and Team Around the School approach (see description of current arrangements below).
• Support universal providers such as schools to hold need and risk through Team Around the Family, Lead Professional roles, working in line with the Threshold Guidance.

Integrated Locality Arrangements

Services for children and families are organised in three integrated localities. We have taken steps to enable each locality to work more closely together so that they can provide a seamless service to children and young people, providing timely and proportionate support depending on the child and family’s needs.

A common systemic approach builds on the strengths of people and communities and recognises the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).

In each locality there is a new Locality Advisory Board giving multiagency oversight. This board is made up of managers and senior leaders from key agencies and partnerships across the locality. They make decisions about the allocation of resources in the locality. They analyse data and identify emerging needs and trends to ensure that resources are managed effectively to meet the needs of children, young people and their families. The Locality Advisory Board meets termly and reports to the Children and Families Partnership Board.

Each locality also has an Integrated Management Team which includes; Social Work Service Manager, Children’s Centre leads and the Families in Focus area managers. The team are responsible for leading their Locality Advisory Boards and make joint decisions about the services provided to children and families in their areas.

Access to services

All children and families access a range of universal services including:
• Health services such as GP’s, Midwifery, Health Visiting, School Nursing and substance misuse services
• Nurseries and playgroups
• Schools and Colleges
• Children’s Centres
• Community, sport and leisure facilities
• Housing
• Youth Services.

These services are well placed to support children and families as they are likely to have regular contact with them and know them well.

When a family’s needs change we tailor the level of support required. As needs or concerns escalate it may be appropriate to provide additional support through targeted services.

For some, a more intensive, multiagency response is required to assist a child and family. Then Families – or services on their behalf - can make a referral to the area Families in Focus team through the completion of the First Response online form.

Families in Focus adopt a whole family approach using strengths based practice and child centred planning to identify and agree goals with family members. They recommend proportionate interventions where we ‘do it once and do it well’ and work in partnership to review plans to ensure effectiveness and sustainable outcomes. The framework for intervention and support for Families in Focus is described in the Threshold Guidance 2018.

Universal services must remain involved even if a child and family is receiving targeted or specialist support at Level 1 plus and/or Level 2 so that there is a whole-system response to meeting outcomes and needs. Universal services will provide the consistency needed by the child and family. (Thresholds Guidance, 2018:5)
Locality Meetings occur weekly or fortnightly in all three localities across the city of Bristol. This is a forum in which a group of multiagency professionals:

- Discuss and review children that are referred to a locality team
- Allocate resources where appropriate
- Provide advice to the lead professional if they have concerns about a child/family with whom they are working
- Signpost the referrer to appropriate resources/services to meet the needs of children and young people
- Consider non-urgent referrals for area social work teams
- Consider ‘step out’ of area social work teams to an alternative Lead Professional.

Team around the School is a graduated offer to support schools to self-help. It is a recent partnership development between schools, Families in Focus, area social work and other agencies and is coordinated by Families in Focus. Its purpose is to:

- Work together to provide Early Help and support and when appropriate advice and guidance to co-ordinate a plan to meet the child and family’s needs
- Focus on prevention rather than crisis intervention and provide an opportunity for early conversations to take place about children and young people that schools are worried about.
- Prioritise support and avoid duplication of services
- Support schools to manage and support children and young people by providing access to specialist advice and guidance

Bristol is currently transforming its arrangements for governance. The Children and Families Partnership and the Bristol Safeguarding Children’s Board will move to a new governance structure. A newly formed Executive Group will oversee the delivery of this Early Help strategy via the appropriate planning and delivery group.

10 Represented at Locality Advisory Boards described in next section.
11 A practice framework is a conceptual map that brings together an approach to practice with children and families. It provides a clear understanding of what underpins the work, and how this informs our interventions with children and families.
6 How will we know we are making a difference?

The local area action plan will set out how we will deliver this strategy. The outputs/activity described in the action plan will be monitored by the Early Help challenge Group. The Strategy is intended to impact on the performance Indicators below, and will be routinely monitored.

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<th>Priorities</th>
<th>Performance indicators</th>
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| Family experience   | • Families report satisfaction with Early Help services (use of Signs of Safety/wellbeing/success)  
• Families receive the right help at the right time and fewer children go into care  
• Key indicators of effective interventions:  
  1 Improved school attendance  
  2 Reduction in youth offending  
  3 Improved family relationships (reduce conflict and DVA)  
  4 Reduction in NEETs  
  5 Improved emotional health and wellbeing. |
| Leadership          | Implementation of locality working arrangements and allied commissioning.                                                                                                                                               |
| Strategy            | • Reduction in the cost of children in care  
• Reduction in tier 3 & 4 service demand e.g. Edge of Care, Custody, CAMHS  
• Reduce demand on front door through reduction of NFA                                                                                                            |
| Culture             | Use of Signs of Safety is evidenced in case audits.                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Workforce           | There is a clear and effective workforce strategy and individual performance management procedures in place.                                                                                                           |
| Delivery processes  | Performance at the ‘front door’ evidences improved threshold and risk management and demand is reducing.  
Staff are using Routine Outcome Monitoring to improve the experience and quality of services and provide feedback to parents.  
We have integrated management, systems and processes in each locality providing a seamless child and family centred response. |