



Early Help Strategy 2022-2027



BEDFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Children's Services
in Bedford Borough

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES



At the heart of everything we do

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Forward

Early intervention is key to helping vulnerable children, young people and families. Children who get help early on avoid getting involved with statutory services and struggling families can be helped back on their feet. Bedford Borough's Children's Services success is founded on its strong Early Help offer which it has retained in spite of the budgetary pressures that affect all Councils, and it was praised in Ofsted's recent report.

It's notable, for example that we have retained a comprehensive network of Children's Centres, strengthened and adapted as centres of population have changed. The vital early years sector has remained strong in spite of the difficulties in experienced under the pandemic. And, as a Council, we've worked with voluntary sector partners to deliver the Borough's anti-poverty measures.

This document sets out our vision for Early Help and our goals for the next five years. It's thanks to our dedicated workforce and strong partnerships with the Police, NHS and voluntary sector that we have succeeded in this vision, and we are committed to maintain it moving forward.



Cllr James Valentine

Portfolio Holder for Education and Children's Services

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

COVID-19 has placed huge pressures on children and families in Bedford Borough, however, during this unprecedented time of challenges our practitioners have worked harder than ever to deliver services to families ensuring Bedford Borough's children, young people and families to get the Right Support and the Right Action at the Right Time.

The evaluation of the service, conducted independently by the ISOS Partnership found the service to be “working outstandingly” offering “a genuinely child-centred, creative and flexible Early Help offer”. The findings from the evaluation were supported by the November 2021 Ofsted inspection which found early help services to be strong with effective partnership ensuring good support for parents to meet their children's needs.

Bedford Borough has continued to buck the trend and Ofsted recognised the council's continued investment and commitment to early help services which has enabled the service to strengthen the support and programmes available for children and their families. There is no doubt, as we look forward to the next five years that the early intervention system will be needed more than ever. Our continued partnership working will be crucial as we support families from other parts of the world to settle in Bedford Borough and to make the most of what is on offer

Early Help is everybody's responsibility and is delivered by early year's settings, schools, health services, the voluntary sector and Bedford Early Help Service. Working together has built an effective Early Help system in Bedford Borough. This, our third strategy sets out our early help priorities for the next five years ensuring we continue to build on the strengths we have, evolve our service further to build on the learning from the pandemic and deliver our shared vision.

The overarching ambition of this strategy is to set out:

- ***A clear strategic vision for Early Help in Bedford Borough***
- ***Our strategic goals and show how they contribute to the Bedford Borough Corporate Vision and Goals and the Children's Services Strategy***
- ***Our commitment to partnership working ensuring children, young people and their families get the Right support, the Right action at the Right time***

Our Vision

“Our shared vision is to give all children and young people firm foundations in life, through a strong network of family, friends and communities, with the earliest and best support that can be offered to build capacity and resilience.”



Local Profile



In 2021/2022 **1,546** contacts to Early Help with **2,364** Early Help Assessments or Team Around the Family Plans completed. 32% were completed by Schools



The Borough has an ethnically diverse population. The 2011 Census reported that **28.5%** of the population was from **BAME** (Black Asian and Minority Ethnic) groups (non-‘White British’) compared to **20.2% nationally**



The majority of **Early Help Assessments** are completed initially for behaviour or mental health and wellbeing concerns

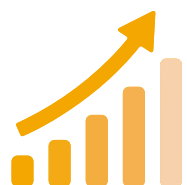


The **BAME population** is concentrated in the urban areas of Bedford and Kempston, with particularly large communities in **Queens Park (75%)** and **Cauldwell (59%)** wards. The proportion of BAME residents is highest among younger age groups.

Data from the 2021 national census was not available at the time of this report, statistical data is due to be released in Spring 2022



The majority **60%** of Early Help Assessments are for boys 2021/22



Over **80%** of families have had their outcomes fully or partly met



498 children are recorded as being impacted by DA (MARAC 20-21)



In the period April 2020 – March 2021 Bedfordshire Police recorded **4,092 Domestic Abuse Crimes** and Incidents in Bedford Borough, an increase of 6% and an average of more than 79 per week



In 2021/2022 **406** parents attended a course or workshop. **87% completed the course**

SECTION 1

OUR FRAMEWORK FOR EARLY HELP

“Our shared vision is to give all children and young people firm foundations in life, through a strong network of family, friends and communities, with the earliest and best support that can be offered to build capacity and resilience.”

Bedford Borough
Vision

Bedford Borough **‘the place to grow’**

Bedford Borough
Corporate Goals

Develop Places

Enable Prosperity

Support People

Empower Communities

Bedford Borough
Children’s Services
Vision



CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES

At the heart of everything we do

Our Commitment co-produced
with Children and Young People

If it’s about you, we don’t want to do it without you

Bedford Borough Early Help
Outcomes Framework



**Getting
In Early**



**Early Help
for our most
vulnerable**



**Supporting
Wellbeing**

Bedford Borough
Children’s Services
Conditions for Success

Relationships

Leadership

Environment

Side by Side

**Practice, Policy
& Systems**

Learning Culture

Diversity

Wellbeing

SECTION 2

EARLY HELP – WORKING TOGETHER

Early Help – Working Together

Early help is the term used in Bedford Borough to describe our approach to providing support to children, young people and their families. We want to support them in the right way with the right actions at the right time to prevent problems escalating.

Early help can be provided through a single agency or a multi-agency response as appropriate to the needs of the child, young person and their family. The Bedford Borough early help approach is in line with Working Together to Safeguard Children also includes evidence based, proactive and planned support for children and young people stepping down from social work interventions or specialist provision.

We want to enable families to find their own solutions and build their own capacity to effect change so ensuring they are able to work with the right services and access the best interventions is essential. Our Early help approach includes our ambition to enable families to access support even earlier through the development of community based support. This approach will support families to come together to utilise their own resources and strengths to overcome challenges.

Early Help is a collective approach and relies on agencies working together with families to identify who needs help and then to meet the varied needs. Quality Early Help work is delivered across Bedford Borough by schools, health services, children's centres, early years settings and the voluntary sector.



SECTION 3

THE EARLY HELP WORKFORCE

The Early Help Workforce

We recognise that our early help workforce is our most valuable asset, uniquely placed to help transform the lives of vulnerable children, young people and their families. The early help workforce is talented, knowledgeable and committed. We look forward to building on the strong partnerships and providing the Right Support and Right Action at the Right Time.

We know it is crucial to have a skilled and knowledgeable early help workforce.

We will:-

- **Provide a comprehensive programme of professional development opportunities for the early help workforce**
- **Support the early help workforce through regular forums and development events**
- **Embed our partnership links to promote innovative and high quality, evidenced based practice across the early help workforce**
- **Support the wellbeing of the early help workforce through a network of Mental Health First Aiders**
- **Provide mentoring opportunities across the early help workforce to share and develop practice**
- **Provide forums for partners to come together to learn from one another and share best practice**



SECTION 4

PRINCIPLES THAT UNDERPIN THE DELIVERY OF THE EARLY HELP STRATEGY

Principles that underpin the delivery of the Early Help Strategy

The uniqueness of children, young people, their families and those who work with them is valued

- The voices of children, young people and families are heard throughout their journey and are at the heart of decision making
- Children and young people's needs drive the planning and delivery of services
- Children, young people and families are empowered to support themselves

There is a continuous focus upon prevention and early intervention

- Universal services are provided with a targeted approach to those most in need
- Effort, investment and resources are focused on intervening early
- Services are provided in a way that contributes to reducing inequalities

We will endeavour to ensure multi-agency working practices are integrated

- Services are co-designed with children and young people
- Clear leadership and accountability for partnership working
- All services have shared outcomes and deliver high quality integrated services

Services will be accessible and flexible

- Services are offered in settings where children, young people and their families feel welcome, safe, comfortable and accepted
- Services are delivered at times suitable for children, young people and families
- Accessibility to services is considered and children, young people and families are supported to participate in ways targeted to their needs

Information will be shared with consent

- Information is shared with professionals in a way that supports children, young people and families to make progress
- Children, young people and families who have special educational needs are communicated with in ways targeted to their needs

Evidenced based services which are value for money will be provided

- Services are delivered to consistent standard, informed by best practice and available evidence
- Services are delivered by a properly planned, educated and trained workforce
- Services respond to the changing needs of children, young people and families and continue to achieve excellent outcomes

SECTION 5

OUTCOME GOALS

Outcome Goals

Outcome Goal 1 - Getting in Early

Why is this Important

Giving children the best start sets the foundations for good health and wellbeing throughout life. We know that intervening early at the onset of any issue increases the opportunity for the issue to be resolved or addressed without the need for higher cost statutory interventions. Many children, young people and adults need a helping hand at transition points in their life from being born, starting school, being a teenager, leaving school and finding work through to the journey of becoming a parent. Others find themselves in Bedford Borough as part of a significant life changing event and support to access education and other support services is crucial to becoming settled and part of the vibrant Bedford Borough community.

We will measure this outcome goal through 3 outcome statements

- Parents, settings and schools are child ready
- Children, young people and families in need of support are identified early
- Children, young people and families who receive early help support feel more equipped to manage their own situation without the need for statutory support

What we will do

- Work with partners to develop “Best Start Bedford Borough” ensuring Bedford Borough’s youngest residents and their parents/carers get the support they need
- Deliver tailored, evidence based universal parenting programmes and support.
- Provide a wide range of support for Bedford Boroughs resettled families which helps them to thrive and become a part of the vibrant community.
- Work with partners to enhance community based support



Outcome Goal 2 - Early Intervention for our most vulnerable

Why is this important

Partnership Working is key to ensuring families receive the right interventions at the right time. Our ambition is to support families, reducing the need for higher cost interventions. The work of the early help system has supported many children, young people and their families to remain together, avoid the criminal justice system and make positive progress. We know that supporting children to remain with their families whenever possible improves their outcomes and the early help service is committed to getting in early to provide interventions for those who face the most challenges.

We will measure this outcome goal through 3 outcome statements

- Children and young people are supported to remain in school and make progress
- There is effective early help support to prevent children and young people being neglected, exploited and abused
- Children and young people have a better understanding of exploitation and be able to make informed choices

What we will do

- Deliver tailored, evidenced based interventions to respond to cases of neglect, exploitation and abuse
- Enhance our work with Alternative Education Providers and schools to develop creative approaches to further reduce children and young people from being excluded from school
- Further develop the work of the Adolescent Response Team team to build closer partnerships to develop best practice and interventions to support young people who are being exploited, neglected or at risk of going into care
- Deliver tailored, evidence based targeted parenting programmes to support those who are parenting adolescents



Outcome Goal 3 - Supporting Wellbeing

The pandemic has placed huge pressures on children, young people and families and for many their wellbeing has been impacted. Anxiety and stress continue to impact on issues such as school attendance, friendships, capacity to parent and access to wider family support. We have seen the need for services to support these issues under greater demand and whilst practitioners have used a range of approaches and technology to continue their work with children, young people and their families we will need to develop further our partnerships to respond to the demand which will continue to grow whilst we are in the midst of the pandemic and beyond.

We will measure this outcome goal through 3 outcome statements

- Children, young people and families have sufficient mental resilience and healthy emotional wellbeing, in order to effectively respond to life's challenges
- Early Help evidenced based approaches contribute to children and young people thriving within their home and school environments
- Young people are ready for further education, training and employment

What we will do

- Further our partnership with Child Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and other providers to deliver a range of wellbeing services to children, young people and their parents
- Continue to build our expertise in Infant Mental Health
- Support parents, schools and multi-agency practitioner with training and supervision in Solution Focused, Protective Behaviours and other relevant evidence based approaches.



SECTION 6

OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK

Outcomes Framework

Early Help Strategy – Outcomes Framework Headline Outcome:

Children, young people and families who receive early help support feel more equipped to manage their own situation without the need for statutory support.

Getting in Early	
Desired Outcome	Evidence
Parents, settings and schools are child ready	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universal Parenting data • Good Level of Development Data • Children’s Centre access reports • Speech and Language data • Outcome Star data • ASQ data
Children, young people and families in need of support are identified early	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of Early Help Assessments completed • The number of Early Help Assessments held by external partners, including schools
Children, young people and families who receive early help support feel more equipped to manage their own situation without the need for statutory support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in number of Social Care Referrals/Assessments • Reduction in the number of repeat referrals to Social Care/Early Help • Parenting measurement tools • Children, Young People and their families provide positive feedback following their interventions • Outcome Star data

*Monthly performance data reviews are used to assess progress against a number of these outcomes.

Early Intervention for our most vulnerable	
Desired Outcome	Evidence
Children, young people are supported to remain in school and make progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclusion data • Attendance Data • Number of young people who have secured a post 16 destination
There is effective Early help support to prevent children and young people being neglected, exploited and abused	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graded Care Profile 2 (both professionals trained and number of cases used) • Number of multi-agency practitioners trained in Reducing Parental Conflict • Number of early help interactive audits carried out and % judged to be good or outstanding
Children Young People have a better understanding of exploitation and be able to make informed choices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people who are identified as victims or at risk of being victims of exploitation will have a safety plan in place which is reviewed regularly. • Exploitation screening tool will be completed and reviewed 12 weekly • Children, young people and their families provide positive feedback following their interventions.

*Monthly performance data reviews are used to assess progress against a number of these outcomes.

Supporting Wellbeing

Desired Outcome	Evidence
Children, young people and their families have sufficient mental resilience and healthy emotional wellbeing, in order to effectively respond to the life's challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of parents attending 'Triple P Fearless' courses • ROMS (Routine Outcome Measures) • Pre and Post measures for Fearless • Youth Star (Increase % of young people making progress on their 'Wellbeing', 'Communicating' and 'Hopes and Dreams' Scores) • Family Star (Increase % of families making progress on their 'Meeting Emotional Needs' Scores)
Early help evidenced based approaches contribute to children and young people thriving within their home and school environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School pastoral staff trained to deliver Solution Focused/Protective Behaviours/Mental Health First Aid etc • Workforce development programme data • % of audited cases where use of evidence based practice has been clearly demonstrated
Young people are ready for further education, training and employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not in education, employment or training (NEET data) • Switch Project data • Early Help Apprenticeship data • Youth Star (Increase % of young people making progress on their 'Hopes and Dreams' scores)

*Monthly performance data reviews are used to assess progress against a number of these outcomes.

Finding out more

If you would like further copies, a large-print copy or information about us and our services, please contact us at our address below.

Për Informacion

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برای اطلاع

Za Informacije

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Informacija

Per Informazione

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