

Early Help Strategy 2021 – 23

Early Help means picking up on any problems as soon as possible so they don't get too big, and working alongside families to put things in place to help them get better



Considering the key information above, we have identified, and we commit to working together to achieve the following three priority outcomes through delivery of our Early Help Strategy.

We will review these priorities to ensure they remain relevant in light of the COVID pandemic and its impact on family life an access to services

1. Not as many children and families require support from specialist services. Reduction in number of children in need
2. More babies / children meet the expected stage of development for their age
3. More children/young people attend school regularly and fewer are excluded

We have used evidence and information from local and national data to develop our vision. We want to achieve our ambition by using a refreshed approach to Early Help across the whole system so that in Merton we know that we have in place:

The Right Help, at The Right Time in The Right Place

Right Help

Work alongside all family members, helping them to think about their worries and come up with their own ideas and plans to make things better, building on their own family and community strengths.

Develop and train the children's workforce so that support is provided by staff who know the children and families best, everyone uses the same language, tools and approaches and everyone knows what to expect.

Right Time

Set things up so that problems are picked up early and support is put in place to help things get better, often through staff who know the children and their families' best.

Work together to provide support to children, young people and their families at the lowest level possible in accordance with their needs.

Right Place

Support connections in the community, building relationships with local people so that everyone knows how and where to get advice and support when they need it and how to access services and support in their local area, from staff that they know already



In Merton, we want to make sure that all children can achieve well in the following areas of life:

Being Healthy	Staying Safe	Enjoying and Achieving	Becoming Independent
Early help to support…	**Early help to support…**	**Early help to support…**	**Early help to support…**
Families to take to steps to make Healthy lifestyle choices Healthy emotional wellbeing for all family members Promotion of key public health messaged (eg. immunisations and dental health)	Children and young people to stay safe in the community Family members to stay safe in the home and enjoy positive relationships Children and young people to reduce risky behaviour Children and young people to enjoy positive activities	Children and young people to enjoy learning and achieve their potential Children and young people to regularly attend education provision (in school or remote learning) Children and young people who may have additional learning needs	Financial independence Access to training and employment Children and young people to manage transitions

Getting Involved and Having a Say
Children, young people and families to inform and shape the support they receive

Connecting with Family, Friends and Community
Connections in the community, building relationships with local people so that everyone knows how and where to get advice and support when they need it

Our approach and commitment to early help will maximize the range of opportunities that are available to us, so that we continue to support families who have the most to gain from accessing the range of services and support. To this end, we will work collaboratively and collectively so our priorities can be achieved together, so that all children and young people:

- Belong
- Are safe
- Can thrive

The full impact of the pandemic on children and family outcomes is not yet known, however, it is anticipated that there is likely to be a widening of the gap, across all children's outcomes, between children living in deprivation with multiple needs and those that do not.

This strategy is a commitment from everyone within our early help system to work address inequalities for the children, young people and families in Merton.

We want Merton to be a place where children and young people:

- Belong
- Are safe
- Can thrive

In Merton, we want all those working with families to have a shared approach to working with families. In order to do this we have adopted a **Systemic, relationship based approach**.

Key elements of the Practice Framework:
The underlying principle behind systemic practice is the ability for those working with families, to build open, honest and strong relationships, and to be able to develop a level of trust which will help them to create real and sustainable change, understanding that individuals are part of a wider context and considering this when working to identify goals and how to achieve them

How the Practice Framework is being used:

The Practice Framework is used throughout our system, including:

- ✓ Discussions with families
- ✓ Early Help Assessments and Family Plans
- ✓ Team Around the Family Networks
- ✓ Supervision

