

## **Southwark's Families Matter**

The Early Help Strategy, empowering every child, young person and family to live happy, fulfilling lives in their local community

2015-2020



## **Southwark Children, Young People and Families**

Final version as agreed by Southwark Council's Cabinet, September 2015



We have high ambitions for children, young people and families in Southwark. We believe that everyone should have the opportunity to achieve their full potential and local services should empower and support our residents to thrive. We have called our approach *Families Matter* because a safe, nurturing and stable family environment is the most important factor in a child's life. By taking a whole-family approach and supporting parents, as well as children as early as possible, we believe we can improve outcomes for all Southwark families. Although there are different services for different levels of need, we want all children, young people and families within Southwark to feel they are receiving support from a single service that seamlessly provides the help they need as quickly as possible. We will work closely together across the Council and with local partners in health, other services, the voluntary sector and the community to achieve this vision. This work compliments Southwark Council's Fairer Future ambition which has its core principles.

- Treating residents as if they were a valued member of our own family
- Being open, honest and accountable
- Spending money as if it were from our own pocket
- Working for everyone to realise their own potential
- Making Southwark a place to be proud of

### Our vision for families in Southwark is that:

All Southwark families lead safe, healthy lives, fulfilling their ambitions and achieving their potential. Every child, young person and family that needs help gets the right support at the earliest possible time, whether in the early years, at school or in adolescence.

**Councillor Victoria Mills**  
**Cabinet Member for Children and Schools**

## Introduction

This paper outlines the *Families Matter* strategy, developed for Southwark as a means to meet our ambitions for all Southwark Children and Families. The paper:

- defines what we mean by our Families Matter approach and the values and principles that underpin the planning, commissioning and delivery of services.
- outlines the national and local policy context for our work with children, young people and families.
- describes our *Families Matter* offer for delivering high quality, effective services to local children, young people and families and how they can be accessed
- sets out how we will measure the impact of our strategy on outcomes for children, young people and families and how we will identify future areas for improvement.

To develop this strategy we have gathered evidence from a number of sources to tell us what we are doing well and what we need to change. We have:

- analysed the evidence that we have on the needs of our population and service users alongside current performance
- used feedback from engagement with over 1000 children, young people and families which is available separately in *1,000 Journeys* and *1,000 Lives*.
- consulted with staff, partners and parents on existing services.
- gathered best practice examples from regular horizon scanning, other local authorities and the Early Intervention Foundation to inform our approach.

## National and local policy context

We know that it is far more effective to provide early help to promote and safeguard the welfare of children, young people and families than it is to react later when problems have already reached crisis level. It is now commonly accepted that in order to achieve this, organisations need to work in partnership both with each other and with their local communities to provide consistent and integrated support.

Helping families at an early point of need has been at the heart of national policy for children over the last decade. Key policy reports such as the Graham Allen review of Early Intervention, the Munro Review of Child Protection and statutory guidance on Working Together to Safeguard Children all confirm the same message that holistic, integrated support for children, young people and families is key to transforming lives.

Recent policy changes have further embedded the importance of integrating services to support children, young people and families.

- The Health and Social Care Act 2012 requires every local authority to establish a Health and Wellbeing Board to bring together local leaders in health and social care and join up the commissioning and delivery of local services. The Special Educational Needs and Disability reforms through the Children and Families Act 2014 have introduced new statutory responsibilities for joint health and local authority commissioning arrangements for these services. Through use of various funding initiatives the government has also promoted local projects which harness the involvement of the community and voluntary sector and strengthen partnership working between agencies.
- Responsibility for health commissioning for 0-5 year-olds is now the responsibility of the local authority. Alongside existing local authority responsibilities for children's centres and school nursing, this provides a further opportunity to establish a more holistic approach for services for children and families.

Southwark's **Health and Wellbeing Strategy**, overseen by the Health and Wellbeing Board has as one of its few key priorities, 'Giving every child and young person the best start in life'. This reflects and is informed by the **Children and Young People's Plan** published in 2013, which set out the commitment to helping every local child, young person and family to thrive, in particular through providing them with the right support at the right time, from early years to adolescence, and ensuring that our most vulnerable children and families receive timely, purposeful support that brings safe, lasting and positive change. The **Southwark Safeguarding Children Board** (SSCB) has a statutory responsibility to assess the effectiveness of the help being provided to children and families including help provided at the earliest possible time. The Southwark Safeguarding Children Board has supported the development of the Families Matter approach as a major avenue for preventing and tackling child neglect, one of the Board's key priorities.

Southwark **Clinical Commissioning Group** is working in partnership with the Local Authority to develop a **Southwark Children and Young People's Strategy** which will provide the strategic direction and intentions for children and young people in the commissioning and delivery of health and social care needs. This will be closely aligned with *Families Matter* to ensure that health services directly contribute to the achievement of the shared outcomes set out in this strategy.

## What is Families Matter?

*Families Matter* is Southwark's approach to delivering services for children, young people and families to ensure that they are provided with the right support at the right time to prevent problems from escalating to higher levels of intervention at greater detriment to their wellbeing. We want to ensure that children, young people and families receive the best possible support at times of need in order to address and resolve issues rapidly and effectively.

*Families Matter* aims to improve outcomes across a range of domains including emotional, educational, physical and mental health and to reduce the need for statutory intervention through child protection and care proceedings.

*Families Matter* builds upon and develops the strengths of our existing, successful provision and clarifies pathways and thresholds to remove any barriers to providing effective and timely support to children, young people and families ensuring it is clearly targeted towards specific levels of need.

*Families Matter* incorporates Southwark's response to the national Troubled Families programme which was introduced by the Government in April 2012 and expanded in 2015 to incentivise local authorities to turn around the lives of families with complex problems. It will incorporate the payment-by-results element of the Troubled Families programme while continuing to ensure that all services are underpinned by the principles of good family intervention, which are:

- a dedicated key worker or lead professional
- practical, 'hands-on support' for families
- a persistent, assertive and challenging approach
- considering the family as a whole; and
- common purpose and agreed action across agencies.

This approach is based on the following principles:

- The role of all services working with children, their parents/carers and families is to ensure that their life chances are maximised, especially those who are potentially disadvantaged.
- Parents have primary responsibility for and are the main influence on their children. Our role is therefore to strengthen parenting ability whilst steadfastly remaining vigilant with regards to our duty of safeguarding vulnerable children and young people.
- The best way of helping people is to help them help themselves. Our role is to support families to be self-reliant, to become less dependent on public services, and to take control of their own outcomes.
- Intervening early prevents longer term, more costly and more damaging problems later. We will therefore invest in early help and targeted services so that we see fewer children requiring specialist services.
- There should be a clear expectation about referral to statutory services where the needs of the child or family indicate that this is appropriate.

- Our strategy for early help will be based on clear and obvious routes to support services according to need.
- Children's needs are best met when addressed in the context of the whole family. Services should therefore work with families in an integrated and holistic way.
- Decisions about what is commissioned and delivered will be evidence based. We will also look to use both quantitative and qualitative measures of the impact of services (this will include user satisfaction) to inform the resources we provide.
- Agencies will work within the legal framework of the Equality Act 2010 and will ensure that all services are delivered in a way which represents, serves and employs people as equals. They will work with children and families to promote a positive sense of identity and recognise and value difference, ensuring that children and family's needs are recognised, responded to and reflected in our workforce.

### The approach features:

- recognition that universal settings within the local community are usually the best place for children, young people and families to receive early support;
- preventative services that will reduce the risk of abuse and neglect and eliminate frustration in families that need to access help;
- a joined up approach to working with families, where they tell their story once, and there are clear internal processes for movement between different services;
- rapid response to an arising need and a commitment to resolving issues at point of need to avoid escalation;
- clear pathways and thresholds of support;
- a commitment to working with families to identify problems and agree on actions that will enable them to raise their children safely and successfully;
- locality-based support and delivery of high quality integrated and co-located services and support
- commitment to a lead professional approach where the most suitable professional coordinates a Team Around the Family where this is required
- openness in requesting and receiving professional advice and support coordination and integration of all providers to maximise efficiencies and effectiveness

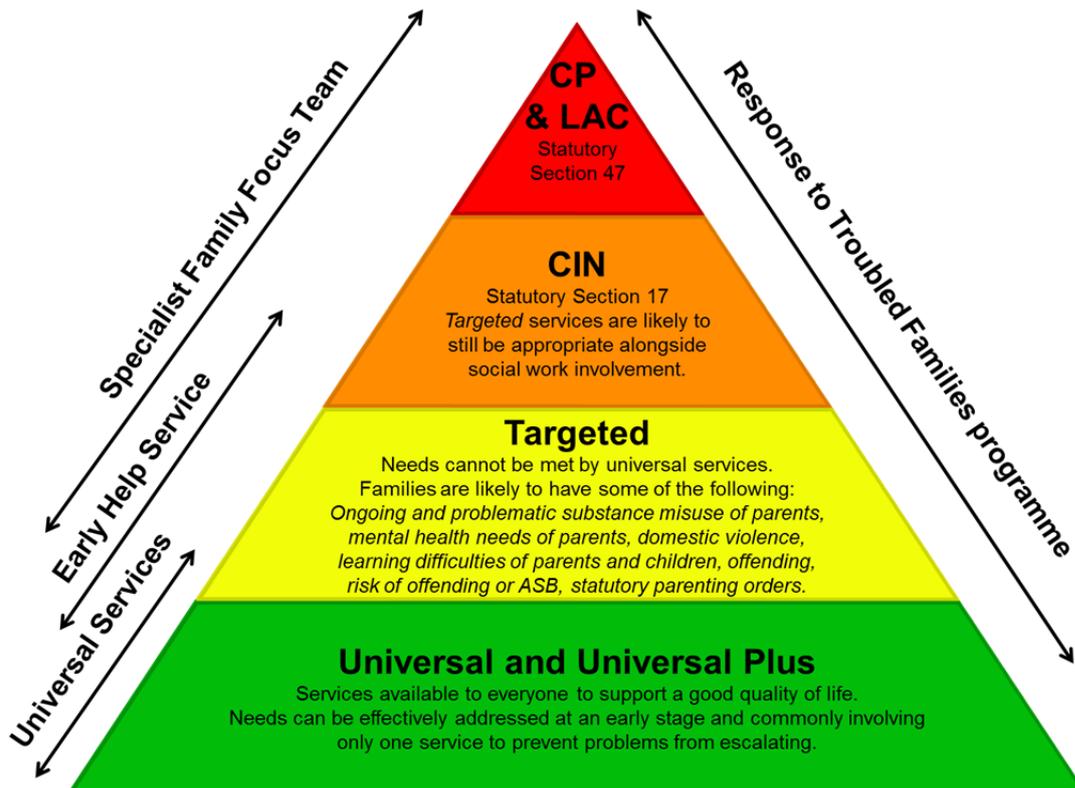
## Delivery of the Service

*Families Matter* is delivered through a tiered approach ranging from children, and families with little or no additional needs to those requiring intensive support from Children's Social Care. To achieve this, there is a continuum of care that ensures that those who require support at varying levels of intensity receive a seamless service and that support continues to be provided for those who no longer need a statutory intervention (eg. children leaving care or no longer subject to a Child Protection Plan). We call this the 'tiered approach'.

*Families Matter* ensures that there is a range of service availability at every tier of support.

- **Effective and accessible universal services from 0-19 years**, including support from children's centres, providers of early years' learning, primary and secondary education, health services, youth services. GP's, Health Visitors and a range of services designated to enhance resilience and contribute to the overall wellbeing of all Southwark families in children, young people and families. If delivery and support is right at this stage, the need for more targeted support should reduce.
- **Services which provide prompt support when problems first emerge** where early resolution decreases the risk of the problem escalating to a higher, more serious level of need, or becomes entrenched, and thus more difficult to resolve.
- **More intensive services** which reduce the number of children and young people who are risk of significant harm and enabling more children and young people to live at home with their families.
- **Statutory Children's Social Care services** for children and young people at risk of or experiencing serious harm, and for higher risk families, whose needs are more complex and require statutory or specialists services.

The visual representation below indicates the different levels of support that are available to respond to the needs of children, young people and families for a range of reasons. We appreciate that these levels are not finite as families may move between these levels of support at different times, all teams and field workers appreciate the importance of working in an integrated way with partners whose skills and expertise come from all levels of support



## Tier One: Universal and Universal Plus

The *Universal* level reflects our commitment to deliver high quality services for all residents of Southwark regardless of their level of need. These are open access services and are the platform for all of Southwark's children, young people and families to enjoy their entitlement to a safe, happy and fulfilling life experience. The services provided at this level help children, young people and families to develop resilience which enables them to manage their own needs alongside the support of friends, extended family, community and faith groups.

Sometimes a child, young person or family may face a specific challenge and need a little more help. Often this can be provided by specific services offered in universal settings that already have a working relationship with the child, young person or family, for example a school, Children's Centre or GPs' surgery. This is what we call Universal Plus provision.

## Tier Two: Targeted Support (Early Help Service and Specialist Family Focus Team)

Sometimes a child, young person or family faces a number of different problems at the same time and requires more support to resolve them. Where needs escalate beyond the level that universal services can address, a range of targeted services are provided in partnership with others to continue to address problems as soon as they emerge and prevent them from escalating. The Local Authority services that operate at this level are the Early Help Service and Specialist Family Focus Team, working collaboratively with a range of partners including schools, early years'

settings, children's centres, health professionals, criminal justice professionals and the voluntary sector.

The Early Help Service operates four locality-based teams comprising Educational Welfare Officers, CAMHS Specialists, Family Support Officers; Early Years Support Officers and a Social Worker. School nurses and Educational Psychologists are also aligned with the locality teams. The teams link directly into Children's Centres for early years' intervention and support, and to primary and secondary schools providing support to families on matters including attendance, exclusions, SEN advice and support, and behaviour support.

The Specialist Family Focus Team (SFFT) focuses on the more complex cases which require intensive specialist support. It works with families to resolve family crisis. The team comprises Outreach and Family Intervention Project keyworkers, Parenting Coordinators, Rapid Response keyworkers, an Adult Mental Health and Substance Misuse practitioner and a Specialist Community Nurse, all supervised by a social work management team. There are also three voluntary sector organisations located with the team who provide intensive parenting and family work in the home or within group settings.

### Tier 3: Children in Need

Services at the Children in Need level of the model focus predominantly on the delivery of services to children, young people and their families where risks are greater and where longer term support may be necessary.

A child in need (CIN) is a child who is unlikely to achieve or maintain a satisfactory level of health or development, or their health and development will be significantly impaired without the provision of services; or a child who is disabled. Children who are privately fostered, who are seeking asylum or whose parents are in prison are also classed as children in need. The majority of cases allocated to Children's Social Care are at Child in Need level and social work intervention at this level is carried out in agreement with the child's parents/carers.

The service provided at CIN level includes an allocated social worker, a social work Single Assessment, a multi-agency Child in Need network and a Child in Need support plan with outcomes and goals. The support plan involves a number of agencies and specific interventions.

### Tier 4: Child Protection and Looked After Children

The Child Protection and Looked After Children level of support encompasses statutory Child Protection, and services for children looked after by the local authority.

A child in need of protection is a child that is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm. The local authority investigates under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989. If the significant harm or the risk of significant harm is evident, a child protection

conference takes place and a Core Group is established. Child Protection Conferences are chaired independently of the social work group holding the case. The conference agrees a multi-agency child protection strategy which is subject to regular and rigorous review.

A child will be taken into local authority care either following court order, or with parental consent (Section 20), in cases where the child's safety cannot be maintained in the family home, even with statutory child protection intervention. A multi agency care plan is agreed and closely monitored, with specific contributions from all partners.

## Key Outcomes

*We want to improve the lives of children, young people and families in Southwark across five key themes.*

### **Healthy Living**

Good health and wellbeing, including addressing mental and physical health, take up of immunisations, dental care and reduction in unhealthy weight.

### **Keeping safe**

Parents are able to parent effectively; children are not at risk of neglect, abuse or sexual exploitation in the home, at school or within the community.

### **Achieving and Attaining**

Children go to nursery or school, their attendance is good and they are able to behave and achieve well. Children leaving school are in further education, training or apprenticeships.

### **Contributing to the community**

Families are taking part in positive activities, feel part of their local community and contributing where they can.

### **Preparing for work and financial stability**

Parents and young people have access to training and qualifications and are supported to find and maintain stable jobs. Families are able to manage their money and reduce debt.

The key measures of success which will evidence the benefits to families include:

- A reduction in the number of children needing the support of statutory safeguarding services via referrals to children's social care.
- A reduction in the number of children needing to be taken into care.
- A reduction in first-time entrants into the criminal justice system.
- More children being supported to live safely at home with their families leading to fewer numbers in care.

- Cost reductions in the budgets of statutory and specialist services due to a reduction in demand measured over a longer term period (5 years).
- Maintaining our positive achievements in by having more young people in in education training or employment and fewer experiencing teenage pregnancy.
- Take-up of universal/ mainstream support for families with a child with special educational needs and disability. Meeting the needs of children with SEND through appropriate targeted services in the community wherever possible.
- Narrowing the gap between children achieving well on the early years foundation stage and those doing less well.
- Qualitative feedback from children and families gathered on a quarterly basis supported via our participation strategy.

*We want to be sure our services are meeting need and making a difference.*

### **Service Outcomes**

- Percentage of service users who say that their situation has improved.
- Number of step downs from social care to a lower tier of support
- The number of cases managed by social care at Tier 4
- Percentage of troubled families “turned around”
- Percentage of audited cases that are judged to be good or outstanding
- Percentage of Children’s Centres rated good or outstanding
- The progress and attainment of Southwark’s children and young people in schools
- Percentage of cases where measurable progress has been observed at last review point
- Percentage of those receiving a service that are satisfied with the service they receive

### **The Importance of Partnership**

The critical features of an effective early help offer include a multi-disciplinary approach that brings a range of professional skills and expertise to bear. Having a relationship with a trusted worker who can engage the child and their family, and coordinate the support needed from other agencies is also crucial. Professional practice must empower families and helps them to develop the capacity to resolve their own problems. This should be combined with a holistic approach that addresses children’s needs in the wider family context, and simple, streamlined

referral and assessment processes. Easy to access services are essential, with no wrong front door, but an ability to communicate and help families to identify what help they need and where this will come from, regardless of the immediate professional expertise available.

The delivery of the strategy will be overseen by a multi-agency Families Matter partnership made up of the Council, the Clinical Commissioning Group, health providers, schools and other key stakeholders.

## Partners – high quality, flexible and innovative services

The success of *Families Matter* relies on a multi-agency service delivery; all partners contributing their skills, expertise, knowledge, information and resources to secure the best possible outcomes for families in need.

Partners in *Families Matter* include:

- Southwark Council
- Southwark Clinical Commissioning Group
- Early years' providers
- Primary schools
- Secondary schools
- Further education providers
- Children's Centres
- GPs
- Pharmacies
- Health Visitors
- Family Nurse Partnership
- Midwives
- Acute health providers e.g. hospitals and other specialist services
- CAMHS and adult mental health services
- Police
- Housing
- Probation and youth offending services
- Community safety
- Youth services
- Voluntary and community sector providers

The first point of contact if you are concerned that the needs of a child, young person or family cannot be met by universal services is through making a referral through the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

## The Role of the Local Safeguarding Children Board

Southwark's Safeguarding Children Board will continue to scrutinise and challenge the local authority and its partners, in respect of the thresholds for the different types of assessment and services to be commissioned and delivered.

The Board has published a threshold guide that includes the process for the early help assessment and the type and level of early help services to be provided. This can be found here:

[http://www.southwark.gov.uk/info/266/child\\_protection/2466/southwark\\_safeguarding\\_children\\_board](http://www.southwark.gov.uk/info/266/child_protection/2466/southwark_safeguarding_children_board)

Southwark's Safeguarding Children Board will provide challenge on the impact of Families Matter, in accordance with its duties under *Working together to safeguard children* (March 2015), which states that the Board should 'assess the effectiveness of the help being provided to children and families, including early help.'

## Priorities

We have identified the following priorities that will guide our Families Matter work over the lifetime of this strategy:

- Coordinating parenting programmes across Southwark to maximise opportunities for parents to access the most appropriate programme at the right time.
- Redeveloping services for Children in Need to strengthen the existing locality-based social work provision and further embed the systemic approach to working with families.
- Reshaping Children's Centres to achieve integration and consistency in delivering high quality early help services for children, young people and families that meet local needs.
- Ensuring a common understanding of multi-agency thresholds and access to services across all of our partner agencies.
- Developing a Families Matter commissioning strategy that provides a single, strategic overview of services that are commissioned and available to partners to achieve our shared outcomes for children and their families
- Promoting greater information sharing between all partners to develop a better understanding of how the work that everyone does contributes to shared outcomes.
- Ensuring that our services are targeted at the needs identified through our needs assessment and case audits including mental health, young people at

risk of offending, domestic violence, child sexual exploitation and female genital mutilation.

- Identifying and supporting young people at risk of radicalisation.
- Finding new ways to engage with families that are cautious about accessing our services and being supportive to ensure that they address their problems.
- Embedding clear processes for stepping up cases to more intensive services when their problems escalate, and for stepping down cases to lower tier services when they no longer require intensive intervention.
- Ensuring that all schools in Southwark, including academies and free schools, adhere to minimum standards for early help services and safeguarding.
- Developing our Local Offer for families so that information on services is clearly accessible at the point of need to maximise opportunities for accessing the right support at the right time.
- Embedding the expertise, knowledge and resources which our Health partners bring to the *Families Matter* agenda, ensuring that health relationships are seamless with local authority ambition for families, children and young people.

## Conclusion

This strategy sets out our approach to early help and will underpin a Families Matter action plan, which will detail the actions to be taken against our priorities. This action plan will be monitored alongside information on outcomes, to enable us to assess the impact in terms of the services provided to families and the difference it has made to families' lives.

Our strategy for early help builds on our previous achievements and takes us on a journey with families to maximise their opportunities for the future. Our early help journey will continue in partnership with statutory and voluntary partners, partnership with communities and partnership with families and young people. We can and will continue to make a difference together.

*Southwark Children's and Adults Services and Partners*  
*July 2015*