



Hertfordshire's Early Childhood Strategy

Making Hertfordshire the best place to grow up



Sally Orr
5/20/2015

Hertfordshire's Early Childhood Strategy:

Making Hertfordshire the best place to grow up

1. Introduction

From pregnancy and throughout early childhood things can happen to families that could affect a child's health, development, attainment and wellbeing throughout their life. We want to minimise the impact of any disadvantage for Hertfordshire children by ensuring all families can access preventative services from pregnancy through the first five years of a child's life.

The Marmot report (2010) states:

"Giving every child the best start in life is crucial to reducing health inequalities across the life course. The foundations for virtually every aspect of human development – physical, intellectual and emotional – are laid in early childhood. What happens in those early years (starting in the womb) has lifelong effects on many aspects of health and wellbeing"¹

Prevention and early help at the earliest stage of life can reduce the need for higher level services later in life. In order to deliver this effectively, Hertfordshire's Health and Wellbeing Board has tasked early childhood services with working in an integrated way.

This means staff from primary health care, health visitors, midwives, children's centres, childcare providers, schools, health improvement and voluntary and community services who support pregnant mothers, young children and their families need to:

- Focus on common goals
- Use consistent assessments
- Share information appropriately and with consent
- Align areas of work to reduce duplication and ensure that families and their needs do not fall between gaps

These are the pledges that will build a firm foundation and an expectation amongst families that if they face challenges in the early years or later in the child's life, they can easily and readily access preventative and early help services to help them cope As we see in the Allen report (2011)²

"The first three years of life create the foundation in learning how to express emotion and to understand and respond to the emotions of others. Lessons learnt in this period can last a lifetime, and prepare an individual to progress physically, mentally and emotionally at every stage of life – especially in becoming a good parent."

¹ Fair Society, Healthy Lives, The Marmot Review, 2010, p94

<http://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/Content/FileManager/pdf/fairsocietyhealthylives.pdf>

² https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/284086/early-intervention-next-steps2.pdf Early Intervention: The next steps; Graham Allen; page 5

Services are available to support families through and across the early childhood life course, including:

Pre-conception and very early pregnancy	pre-conception and planned pregnancy, early booking into midwifery services, maternal mental health, healthy diet and vitamins, cessation of smoking, substance and alcohol
Pregnancy	antenatal care, screening and immunisation, parenting preparation, in utero attachment – My Baby’s Brain ante-natal, peri-natal healthy lifestyle and maternal mental health, cessation of smoking, understanding maternity rights and benefits,
Babies and toddlers	Healthy vitamins, parenting, breast feeding, physical, language and social development, attachment - My Baby’s brain, diet and weaning, immunisation, oral health, childcare provision, returning to work, maternal mental health, early learning
Early years and school readiness	school readiness and moving on, home learning, parenting, childcare, child developmental progress, healthy weight, management of minor illnesses, preventing accidents

We want to support and empower families and local communities to work with professionals from all sectors in order to make Hertfordshire the best place to grow up in for our 76,972 children aged less than 5 years (mid-year estimates 2103)

2. The pilot projects

Three pilot projects were established in September 2014 in order explore the 0-5 outcomes framework for the Healthy Child Programme (HCP), to test out how integrated working could be encouraged, and what impact this would have on families and on services.

The three pilots focussed on different priorities:

Stevenage

- Developing and delivering a healthy lifestyle programme for parents and children
- Speech and language development

South Oxhey

- Developing and delivering a childhood minor illnesses session for parents and professional

Potters Bar

- Development of an integrated two year old check
- Exploring ways to support an increase in breastfeeding rates

The key overarching learning points are:

- Given the co-dependence of the services involved in the delivery of services for young children and their families multi-agency oversight is essential to ensure services are working effectively together to collectively support local children and families.
- High-level commitment to integration is required by all organisations combined with a shared understanding and ownership of the issues and use of an integrated outcomes framework
- Local networks of professionals are best placed to identify, develop and co-ordinate service delivery according to local need
- Parents should experience a consistent and joined up response from all services working with families with children aged 0-5.

3. The Early Childhood Service pledges

Following the learning from the pilots, using the JSNA children's data and feedback from the multi-agency workshop, Early Childhood Service pledges have been developed. In order to work in an integrated, aligned way for the benefit of young children and families, practitioners delivering and commissioning pregnancy and early childhood services must sign up to the following pledges:

Pledge 1

We will focus on common goals

A cross sector group has agreed the following outcomes are the common goals for all practitioners delivering early childhood services in Hertfordshire:

- Young children develop well and are ready for school
- Parents have high aspirations for their children, good self-esteem and are confident in their parenting skills
- Parents and their children develop a secure and sustained attachment from birth so that child's needs are recognised and addressed by their parent
- Families live healthily and have good mental health and wellbeing
- All families can access preventive services, and those families who face challenges within the early years or later in life are aware of how they can access support from Hertfordshire's Families First offer

These need to be promoted and publicised widely across the sector.

"I wish I had known this information before – I wouldn't have gone to my GP or A&E as often"

mother

Pledge 2

We will work towards consistent assessments of need

In order to understand each other and the needs of a family, services should be using common assessments. The following are already available for cross-sector use:

At a county level:

- The JSNA, including the Hertfordshire Maternal Health Needs Assessment, Children's Centre profiles, Hertfordshire Child Poverty Needs Assessment

At an individual/family level:

- Family e-CAF
- Graded Care Profile
- Family Outcomes Star
- Hertfordshire's model of the integrated two year old development check (by September 2015)

Further work is needed to embed these as the assessment tools for Hertfordshire.

Pledge 3

We will work towards effective, appropriate information sharing and communication so that families only have to tell their story once, and the right level of service is provided at the right time.

Work has begun:

- Consent to contact children's centres is included in the Red Book
- Monthly 'Family Matters' meetings are held between children's centre staff and health visitors
- Online form for GPs to refer families to their local children's centres goes live by late summer 2015
- Some booking in/ante-natal clinics are held in children's centres and/or with children's centre staff
- GP registration data for children aged 0-5 is shared with children's centres
- Parents claiming their funded early education entitlement have to provide their NHS number
- Details of families eligible for two year old funding is shared with children's centres
- Some schools share EYFSP results with children's centres

"The feedback from parents is particularly encouraging and supports the view that there is a lack of understanding and confidence about what services are available and when more information is made available it has the potential to change behaviour by building confidence"

Sarah Hill, Herts Valley CCG

There are local examples of good practice, but there is still concern and confusion about what information can be shared at an individual level, with parental consent used as a barrier.

“The children’s centre staff are very warm and welcoming and very knowledgeable about local services. They helped me gain 2 yr old funding for nursery which I wouldn’t have otherwise known about, which has been fantastic for my child’s development.”

mother

Pledge 4

We will clarify and simplify pathways to services for families, and we will plan, review and monitor services together to reduce duplication and avoid creating gaps

From conception of a new baby through to when their child starts school, parents can access a range of health, education and family support services to help them provide the best possible start in life for their children. But it can be a complicated picture of services for families to navigate. We will simplify and clarify the pathways to services for families and publish these as a cross service document.

“Getting these free vitamins has given me that extra peace of mind that me, Dex and bump are getting the good stuff we need. It’s great that I can just pick them up from my local children’s centre because it’s on my doorstep”

mother

The Early Childhood Programme Board will agree annual priorities and a cross service commissioning plan, which will review the impact of services and consider future service developments. This Board will report into the Children and Young People’s Integrated Commissioning Executive and will be aligned with the Early Help Programme Board and the Health Improvement Board.

4. Priorities for 2015/16

The JSNA data and feedback from a multi-agency workshop held in March 2015 indicates that the priorities are:

- Supporting pregnant women, babies and young children to be physically and mentally healthy
- Ensuring that all children are ready to start school because their development needs have been supported and met at home and in early education and childcare settings
- Building the confidence and resilience of parents in their parenting role so that they and their children enjoy happy and safe early childhood years with secure attachment in place
- Integrating services and clarifying pathways to ensure need is met
- Building the role of local communities to support young families in order to increase social inclusion through peer support

The commissioning plan will be developed to address these and the early childhood service pledges.

