

DRAFT

**HARINGEY COUNCIL
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICE
EARLY YEARS POLICY**

"We want every child and young person to be happy, healthy, safe and confident about their future" Haringey Children's Trust Vision 2009

INTRODUCTION

1. Haringey has a long and successful tradition of investment in early year's education and care. We know from experience that from birth children have a love of discovery and a natural desire to learn and explore. They need stimulating, child centred environments where they can play indoors and outdoors and, as they grow, to talk and think creatively with adults and other children.
2. Well established national and international research shows that the quality of care, support and education children receive in the first five years of life has a fundamental impact on their development for the rest of their lives. Given the best foundation, this can prepare children for a lifetime of successful learning and achievement. We believe passionately that providing that best start is a vital task and that if the services we provide directly, or support, do this well, that we can significantly influence children's life chances, so they achieve better outcomes.
3. Providing the highest quality of education and care is essential to make that difference for young children, but investing in early years is not only about these aspects of service delivery. It is also about investing in families, and over the last sixteen years Haringey has worked to develop comprehensive and holistic services to our youngest citizens and their families, especially those who are poorer and disadvantaged. We see families as partners in this process where they are engaged and are active participants in the process.
4. Working with many partner providers across all sectors, and many agencies, our early years policy is rooted in that comprehensive model where those who are most disadvantaged are prioritised, and encouraged to access our services within the wider universal framework. We believe that targeted intervention can contribute to narrowing the gap between those who are socially and economically disadvantaged and those who are not, and that early years services have a key role in tackling child and family poverty.
5. Using our collective resources we aim to transform life chances for children and families through collaborative working across services and in partnership with families.

Our policy principles

6. To do this we will work to:

- ensure that early years education and childcare provision is of the highest quality, supporting providers through training, guidance, support and challenge to raise standards;
- narrow the gap between the 20% most disadvantaged in our community and others by targeting our early years provision and resources effectively;
- manage our SSCC early years admissions and available resources to ensure we reach the neediest children in our communities;
- build strong multiagency and collaborative working with Health, Children's Social Care, Jobcentre Plus and other partners to ensure families' needs are identified and met as effectively as possible;
- help parents/carers in preparing for employment and/or accessing employment opportunities as a route out of poverty;
- develop an early years funding formula which reflects this commitment to narrow the gap between the most and least disadvantaged, and ensures that the allocation of funding is open, transparent and fair, taking into account the specific challenges of each setting;
- support all private, voluntary and independent providers in preparing for Ofsted inspection by introducing an accreditation scheme;
- ensure they secure at minimum a satisfactory judgement when inspected by Ofsted and to support them in continuous improvement to achieve a good or outstanding judgment;
- ensure all settings are as flexible as possible, to meet the needs of individual children and their families, to be accessible and to have well qualified staff who have regular and ongoing training in order to continually improve their practice; and
- annually assess the sufficiency of education and childcare in Haringey and the needs of families in order to identify gaps and establish plans.

7. In implementing these principles there are key factors which mitigate against some of the disadvantages many children experience and which can reduce their impact and effects on them. These include:

- strong relationships between parents, family members and other significant adults;
- parental (or other significant adult) interest and involvement in education and learning;
- clear and high expectations;
- high self esteem, feeling valued, confident and motivated;
- a nurturing environment that develops these dispositions and provides positive and caring role models;

- recognition , praise and experience of success; and
 - economic well-being.
8. Sure Start Children’s Centres are resourced to provide outreach, family support and many other local services to complement early education and childcare provision. They are particularly well-placed to work with families to focus on promoting these, and to work with families raise aspirations for themselves and their children.

We aim to ensure that:

- families have easy access to the services they need;
- parents/carers are actively engaged and involved in provision;
- interventions are evidence based and well-matched to the different levels of need so they have a lasting and positive impact on children, young people and their families;
- we work with partners to engage families, offering the right early years provision and support for them and their children in a timely and effective way using our universal services wherever possible, and signposting to other targeted or more specialist services when needed.

WHAT SHAPES OUR POLICY?

Demography and social factors

9. Haringey is one of the most socially divided boroughs in England with extremes of wealth and poverty. Tottenham has the highest level of child poverty in England and overall Haringey is the fifth most deprived borough in London and the tenth most deprived district in England.
10. Some seventy five per cent of Haringey’s children and young people are from black and ethnic minority communities, and over 190 different languages are spoken. Thirty six per cent of children in the Borough grow up in families struggling to meet the basic necessities of life. There is a significantly rising birth rate in the eastern wards placing pressure on school places and other services. But what differentiates and demarcates Haringey is the wide social divide which exists between the poor eastern part of the borough and the richer west. This makes Haringey the most socially divided borough in London.
11. The borough also has an increasing number of children subject to child protection plans and/or who have come into the care of the Local Authority. There are also children who require more specialist provision, often outside of Haringey, because they have an additional need.
12. Our early years policy takes account of these key demographic and social changes and these, alongside the inequality gap underpin our approach to service planning and resource allocation.

Legislative Framework

13. As a local Authority we have a duty to;
 - ensure that there are sufficient good quality childcare places available for all children who's parents wish to use them;
 - provide information to parents about the services and childcare available to them;
 - ensure that we support improved educational outcomes for all children by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage; and
 - narrow the gap in attainment by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage between the lowest attaining 20% of children and the rest.

14. Settings and schools who provide early education for children up to 5 years old must;
 - work within the statutory guidance of the Early Years Foundation Stage;
 - assess children's progress within the Early Years Foundation Stage and make judgements about their achievements using the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile by the end of the year in which they become 5;
 - take part in moderation processes both within the school or setting and within the Local Authority moderation programme.

Risk Factors

15. The Children's Trust Preventative Strategy identifies a number of specific groups of children who maybe or become at risk. National research also demonstrates that when families are subject to certain risk factors, the children are more likely to become vulnerable. These are cumulative and the more risk factors experienced by the child, the greater the risk. These include:
 - poverty;
 - living in our household where there is domestic violence;
 - poor housing;
 - crime and experience of the criminal justice system;
 - poor mental/physical health; and
 - poor quality and/or disrupted education

16. Early years providers across all sectors have an important role to play giving children and families the best provision and support they can to make a real difference to children and their families in these crucial early years. As the commissioning and accountable body the Local Authority will ensure providers perform effectively in line with their service level agreements, and will offer support, challenge, guidance and training to assist in this.

17. At present the responsibility for admitting children rests with each provider. We will work with providers to enable them to target the children with the highest priority and to make sure that they have the best information available. The Council's Admission criteria for maintained settings are set out in Appendix A.

What will we do?

18. Working in our children's networks and through well-understood and established collaborative arrangements we will share information about need in the relevant reach area for each Sure Start Children's Centre. This sharing of information is vital so that:

- community outreach workers effectively identify parents or prospective parents who might not otherwise take advantage of the services that could make a difference to them; and
- partner services can set local priorities and plan effectively to meet those needs

19. To achieve this we will bring together the commitment and resources of the full range of statutory, voluntary and community partners.

20. We will monitor the intake of our early year's provision to make sure that the children most in need are accessing places and where necessary, we will adapt and challenge the decision-making processes within the statutory framework within which we are required to work.

21. All children must have access to 15 hours free provision from the term following a child's third birthday up until they reach compulsory school age. We will fund providers to deliver a minimum core offer of flexibility to any parent who wants it and working with parents and providers, we will identify a workable and economic flexibility model which incorporates local choice within the Government's national limits, working to the Code of Practice on Provision of the Free Early Education Entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds.

22. As a Local Authority, we have a duty to provide information to the public on childcare and related services and to ensure that the information is made accessible to all parents who might benefit from it (including those that require services for their children up to their 20th birthday). The Haringey Family Information Service and the online Directory www.haringey.gov.uk/fisd partly fulfils this but there must also be outreach and face to face discussions with families within their local community.

Admissions Criteria

- Children who are looked after by the Local Authority;
- Children with Special Educational Needs;
- Children who are resident in Haringey and:
 - have a social or medical need;
 - are housed in temporary accommodation;
 - are cared for by a lone parent;
 - are refugees and asylum seekers;
 - are families on income support;
 - have English as an additional language;
 - are from a family with a number of pre-school children

Please note that the admissions policy for 3 & 4 year olds is being reviewed and may therefore be subject to change next year.