



Partnership Early Help Strategy 2022-27



Lambeth



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About this document

Title: Partnership Early Help Strategy
Purpose: To set the ambition and priorities for the Lambeth Early Help partnership over the next 5 years, ensuring that we are working together to provide effective help to children and families, at the earliest opportunity.
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Next review date: September 22





Our Children and Young People

Our borough at a glance

Lambeth is a borough of huge diversity, strength, and possibility. Lambeth is home to approximately 63,210 children aged 0-18, nearly 20% of our borough's population.

As a partnership, we have the highest ambitions for our children and want them to grow up to be happy, safe and thriving in supportive communities. We have a rich network of good and outstanding schools, a passionate voluntary community sector and an exciting youth and play offer.

Children growing up in Lambeth are surrounded by beautiful green spaces and a borough with a rich history, arts, and music scene. Lambeth is also embarking on its 3-year journey to become an accredited child friendly community in partnership with UNICEF UK. The programme will support all services across Lambeth in putting the rights and voices of children and young people at the heart of everything we do.

Too many children and families in our borough face challenges and adversity. There are several health and wellbeing indicators that are higher in Lambeth than other boroughs, including children in need due to parent disability, first time entrants to youth justice system, and children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

Lambeth is the 5th most densely populated borough in the UK with sharp contrasts between wealth and poverty. It is estimated that 27% of our children and young people are living in poverty. We know that the Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated challenges for many families in Lambeth and created a new set of problems for others. In this context, early help is more important than ever.





Our Children and Young People



Children who use our services

▶ 0-5 year olds

Health visiting provides a universal service for children aged 0-4 and in June 2021, 14,901 children were registered with a health visitor in Lambeth . By mapping registrations with the multiple deprivation index, we can see that 20% of our children aged 0-4 are living within the 10-20% most deprived areas in the country. Data shows that the areas around Brixton, Loughborough junction, Tulse Hill and Stockwell have the largest numbers of children living in the areas of greatest deprivation, followed by Gipsy Hill in the South of the borough.

The early years (0–5 years) are a crucial time for children’s development. Our network of Better Start Children’s Centres offer a range of activities, help and support for young children and care givers. These include services such as: ante-natal and post-natal care, breastfeeding support, diet and nutrition advice, parenting courses and support around school

readiness. Better Start workers provide help to families with babies and young children to overcome challenges relating to children’s health, learning and development; parenting and co-parenting relationships; housing debt and access to benefits; and to enable them to access the practical resources they need. Services are predominantly used by families living in our most deprived wards, with families of Black and Multiple Ethnicities represented more highly than those of White British background.

Lambeth also has a thriving early years childcare sector, with the very large majority of our private, voluntary and independent providers rated good or better by Ofsted. Approximately 60% of eligible two year olds and 82% of three and four year olds take up their free early learning entitlement. We know that the childcare market and offer is complex, and that some of our most vulnerable children do not benefit from high quality early years provision.



Our Children and Young People

► School population

Lambeth has an exceptional network of Ofsted-rated good and outstanding schools. There is good evidence that children and young people’s social and emotional development and mental health is linked to educational success, while emotional problems, including those related to problems at home, can negatively affect academic progress and participation.

37,590 children and young people attend school in our borough and 17.8% of our school population are identified as having special educational needs. We have worked hard to transform our approach to exclusions and are proud that the numbers of children being permanently excluded has reduced significantly, from 43 at its peak in 2017 – 2018 to 5 in 2021.

Schools are well placed to be among the first to spot signs of difficulties such as mental wellbeing, domestic abuse, housing, and welfare issues and that is why schools are at the forefront of our new early help strategy.

► Children’s Social Care

Lambeth’s Integrated Referral Hub is the ‘front door’ into children’s social care and accepts referrals from the public, families, and practitioners. In 2021, the Hub responded to 10,969 contacts, with the police continuing to be the top referring source.

Approximately 10% of referrals into Lambeth’s front door will be referred to Early Help. At the beginning of April 2022, Early Help were working with 226 families and 462 children.

The profile of Lambeth’s children in care is predominantly those aged 6-10 years old (however the 16–17-year cohort is increasing) and are mainly of Black or Black British ethnicity (51%). The number of children in Lambeth’s care is projected to grow over the next three years





Our Children and Young People

Our challenges and concerns

► Racism and Inequity

We know that inequalities persist in our communities. Major events have brought many peoples' lived experiences of discrimination to the forefront of national conversation. The Covid-19 pandemic has sharply exposed racial and wider inequalities in our society, and subsequent lockdowns, job losses, bereavement, school closures and isolation have had an enormous impact on our residents. For example, because of school closures, some children have missed a substantial amount of learning and there is evidence that this will disproportionately impact on children from our most deprived wards.

The Black Lives Matter movement exposed, once again, the reality of social injustices and racism as part of the day-to-day reality of black lives. Lambeth's demography is ethnically diverse and the borough's child population is even more so. Inequity exists, and certain groups are over-represented and under-represented in our services. Systemic

inequalities result in poorer outcomes across many spheres of life, educational attainment and inclusion, employment and income, housing, policing and health and wellbeing.

We believe that early help is critical to children and families getting the support they need to succeed. As a partnership we recognise the responsibility on us to proactively review our services, listen to families, remove barriers to access and hold others accountable.

► Violence against Women and Girls

Violence against women and girls describes crimes that disproportionality affects women and girls, such as domestic abuse, sexual violence, so-called honour-based violence, sexual exploitation and female genital mutilation/cutting. In Lambeth we developed one of the first integrated VAWG services in the country in recognition of the gendered and complex nature of these crimes.

Lambeth's new VAWG Strategy rightly puts children at the front and centre of our borough-wide response. Too often children blame themselves and are afraid of telling adults what is happening. As an early help partnership, we recognise our role as trusted adults, we recognise that children are victims in their own right and our responsibility to act when we see that a child needs our help.

► Youth Violence and Contextual Harms

We know that young people in Lambeth are exposed to violence far more than most boroughs. We also know that the burden of this injustice falls unequally on our Black communities and affects far more Black children and young people than other groups. Our award-winning Lambeth Made Safer Strategy outlines how we are working with our partners to address violence using a public health approach. As an early help partnership, we are committed to addressing the root causes of violence and creating services and environments where young people are supported at the earliest possible opportunity.



Our Children and Young People

► SEND and Inclusion

In Lambeth, we have slightly higher rates of children with special educational needs compared with other boroughs. We also know that, in Lambeth, there are more Black children with special educational needs or disabilities compared to white people. And more boys than girls have special educational needs or disabilities.

Children with special educational needs and disabilities might need additional support, such as to participate in school and college. Our new SEND and Inclusion strategy outlines how we intend to identify children with additional learning needs as early as possible, such as working with our nurseries and healthcare providers, as well as empowering families to know about the services and support available to them.

► Exclusions

Significant work has been undertaken with Lambeth Schools as a means of permanent exclusion

avoidance. Significant work has been undertaken with Lambeth schools to reduce permanent exclusion. Schools have taken proactive approaches to find alternative ways so that pupils can remain in mainstream education wherever possible. These processes have been embedded into the Fair Access Panel (FAP) and include potential options such as Managed Moves and Managed Transfers.

Our data shows that permanent exclusions have reduced from 43 in 2017/18 (0.12%) to 5 during 2019/20 (0.01%). This includes no permanent exclusions at primary level or within the SEN cohort. Work will continue to be undertaken with Lambeth schools and out of borough locations to further embed FAP processes and with the aim of having no permanent exclusions over time.

► Poverty

It is estimated that 27% of our children and young people are living in poverty, this rises to 43% when housing costs are factored in. This is driven by a multitude of reasons including lack of appropriate



and affordable housing, insecure employment opportunities and soaring childcare costs.

The Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated the effects of poverty and more families are in need of our help and support than ever before. We know that, working together, we can reduce the impact of poverty on children’s development through effective help that is sufficiently intensive and targeted at the families who need it most.



What is Early Help

Early Help is a partnership approach to ensuring that children, young people, and families receive the support, advice and help they need, at the time they need it.

Early help supports families to overcome issues and plan for a brighter future.

Early help can be provided at any point in a child's life, starting antenatally, through the early years and into the teenage years. Early help can also be provided to children as part of a support plan, such as when a child has returned to their family from care.

Most families will at some point face an issue which requires a level of help and support. In Lambeth we use a 'Levels of Need framework' as a guide to the most appropriate response to the needs of a child, family or context:

1 Self Help & Universal Services

"I can usually find a solution to issues myself or with a little direction I can"

2 Community Early Help

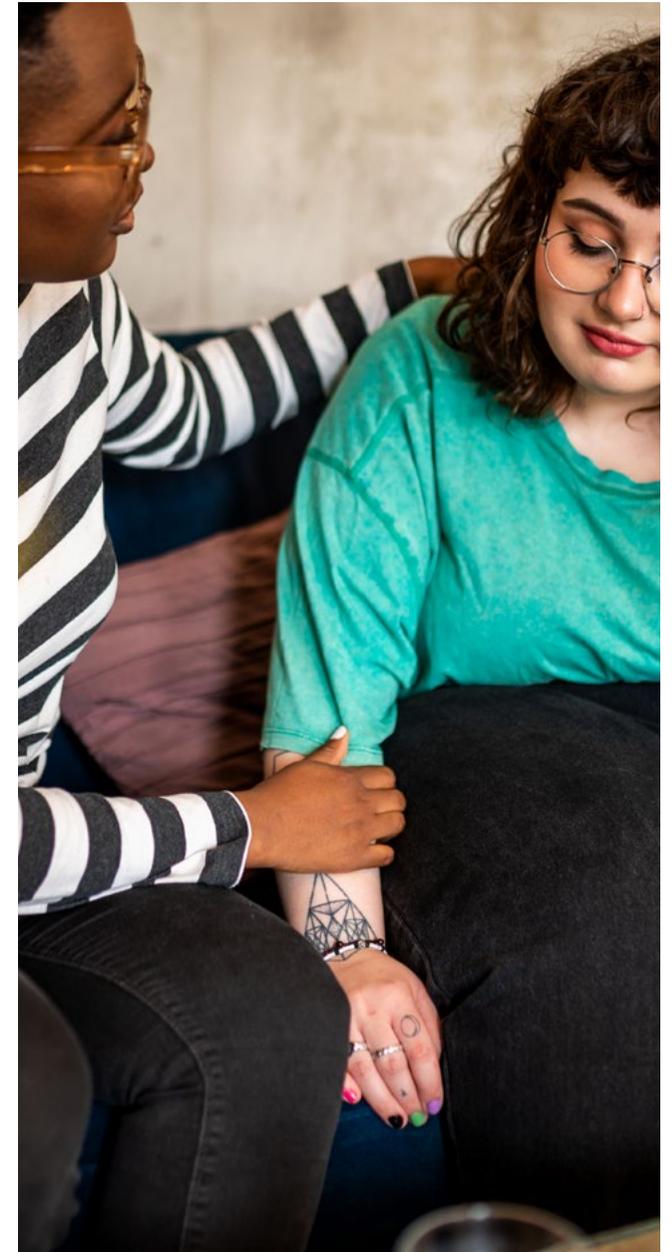
"I need some guidance and practical support to help me solve this problem for myself"

3 Specialist Early Help

"I need practical support and someone to show me how I can change some things in order for me to overcome this problem"

4 Specialist Protection

"I need someone to work with me intensively to ensure that I can eventually resolve my own problems"





The Need for Early Help

Why we need early help

Providing early help is much more effective than reacting later. There is substantial evidence that early help can make a difference in improving outcomes for children and reduce public spending on high-cost statutory and crisis interventions.

Research shows that spending on preventative children's services has fallen year on year, from contributing to 41% of children's services budgets in 2010/11 to 25% in 2017/18 – this is largely driven by significant reductions to council budgets and increasing demand for child protection services. In a context of rapidly reducing resources and the long-term effects of the Covid-19 pandemic yet to be seen, effective early help is more important than ever.

We believe that we need to rethink how early help is provided and the role of our partnership and communities to create a sustainable and resilient early help offer.

Lambeth Early Help Team

Early help provided by Lambeth Council currently consists of 2 elements:

- **Specialist Early Help**

Our specialist Early Help Team provides families with a dedicated worker to help them to make changes, making use of the wide range of resources and services across the borough.

Our service is based on a 'locality' approach, whereby our teams have built strong relationships and expertise with our partners and the community to respond to specific challenges.

- **Tier 2 Community Early Help**

Our community early help service provides practical support and guidance to families to overcome challenges and achieve positive change by connecting them to the wealth of resources within our community.

Early Help is Everyone's Business

Providing early help is not the responsibility of one service or organisation – it is everyone's business. As laid out in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018, Effective early help relies upon local organisations and agencies working together to:

- Identify children and families who would benefit from early help
- Undertake an assessment of the need for early help
- Act to address the assessed needs of a child and their family.



Our Vision

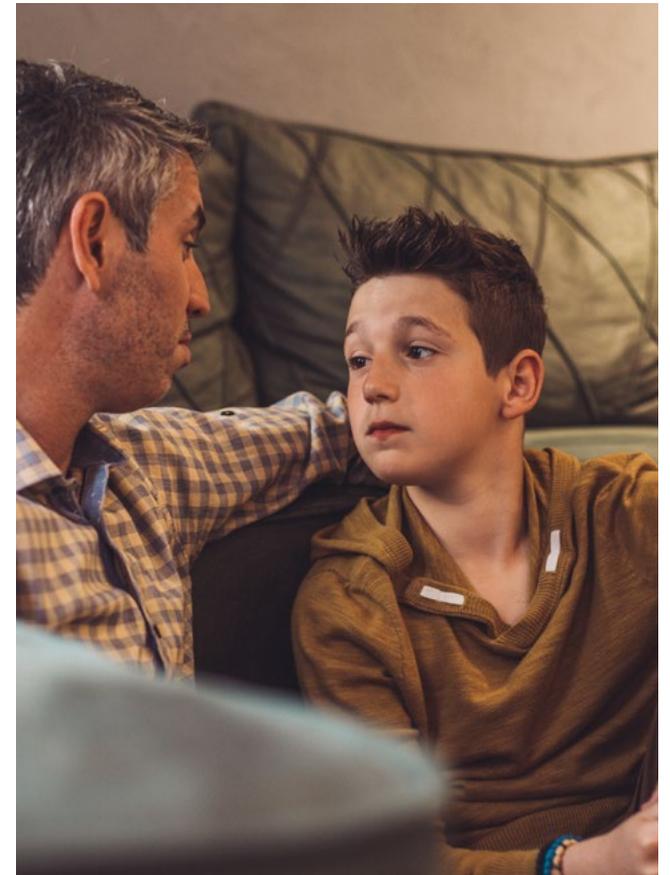


All children and families in Lambeth are happy, safe and thriving in a supportive community... our partnership is working together, and with families, to overcome systemic inequalities enabling children and families to reach their potential.



Lambeth's Partnership Pledge

- ▶ If a child needs our help, we won't wait. We will provide help as soon as we can
- ▶ We will not be complacent and will reflect on our policies and cultures that contribute to inequity. We will hold ourselves and one another accountable when we see discrimination
- ▶ We will be transparent and honest with our families, to build trusting relationships
- ▶ We will make every communication and contact count
- ▶ We will empower families and communities to identify and achieve their own goals
- ▶ We will take action to inspire children in Lambeth, so they have hopes, opportunities and aspirations for their future.





Priorities and Workstreams

1. Improve access to information, advice, and support
2. Empower workforces and communities
3. Develop effective Systems and Infrastructure
4. Develop creative school approaches





1. Improve access to information, advice, and support

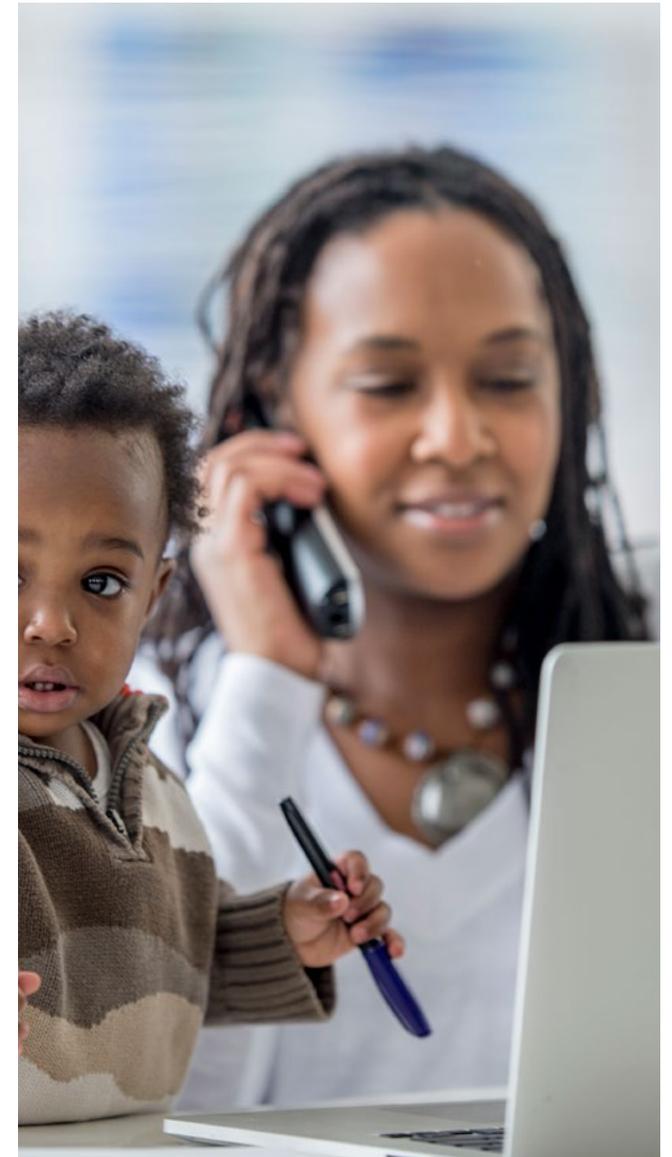
Families will have access to the right support, advice and help that they need, when they need it.

Families have told us that it is difficult to know about the services that are available and how to access them. Sometimes, families feel like they are ‘passed’ between services often having to repeat their stories to multiple people.

Our partnership is our greatest asset, and we will work together to provide services in a smarter and more co-ordinated way.

To deliver on this priority we will...

- ▶ Revise and simplify the early help assessment and plan template and provide accompanying guidance and training, to empower community partners to complete early help assessments and support plans in collaboration with families
- ▶ Further develop our Tier 2 service to connect families, with services and resources in the community
- ▶ Develop an ‘outreach’ arm to Lambeth’s Early Help service to support partners in providing early help where family’s needs are best met within the community
- ▶ Improve communication channels between referring agencies and Lambeth Children’s Social Care, so that decisions are transparent.
- ▶ Improve the referral process between children’s centres and Lambeth’s specialist early help team
- ▶ Revise and simplify the early help toolkit so that practitioners are clear on how early help ‘works’ in Lambeth. Create an easy read option for families.





2. Empower workforces and communities

Services and practitioners will have the confidence, skills and tools to act when challenges arise.

Our Early Help strategy is set in the context of recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, increasing demand for specialist protection services and considerable financial challenges across the early help partnership. We need to find innovative ways of working and foster strong and resilient communities.

Practitioners across all services will have access to the information, training, and support they need to provide the best possible early help. Over time, and with the right support, community partners will be at the forefront of early help with the council becoming supportive and facilitative.

To deliver on this priority we will...

- ▶ Embed a shared understanding and commitment to the principle that ‘early help is everyone’s business’ and develop a communications campaign around this message
- ▶ Undertake annual ‘skills audits’ to review the training needs of community partners
- ▶ Work in partnership to design a comprehensive training offer to help partners provide early help. We will review and refresh training on an annual basis
- ▶ Develop our strengths-based and solutions-focussed methodology, working with the views and experience of the child and family so that they can be independent of services
- ▶ Develop the locality model to build on the strengths of our diverse communities, improving representation and participation in locality meetings and ensuring representation from our ‘by and for’ and specialist services
- ▶ Develop a bespoke contextual safeguarding service within Children’s Social Care and build capacity across the partnership to understand the context around children and families.





3. Develop effective Systems and Infrastructure

Our early help approach will be fit for the 21st Century, utilising technology, and data to enhance our offer.

Our early help partnership includes many different sectors and organisations. We are a wealth of knowledge, data and insight, but often there are barriers to us working collaboratively because of our differing systems and lack of information sharing protocols. We will develop our collection and use of data to improve our services, and we will use digital platforms smartly to improve the experience for practitioners and families.

To deliver on this priority we will...

- ▶ Improve our understanding of disproportionality by collecting and analysing data about representation and access in our services. We will develop a clearer picture of disproportionality in Lambeth children’s services and actions plans to address it
- ▶ Develop our web-based directory of services for children and young people to raise awareness of the services in Lambeth. We will promote the Directory so that practitioners and families can access information and support easily and quickly
- ▶ Incrementally review our decision making of families who receive ‘No Further Action’ following a referral to Children’s Social Care to understand the implications for early help
- ▶ Develop a ‘Partnership Portal’ for partners to input their early help assessments and plans to improve information sharing with the council
- ▶ Develop a portal for families to provide their feedback on a regular basis, and at any point in their journey
- ▶ Create an Early Help data dashboard to establish a better understanding of our local needs and our localities. We will use the dashboard, together as a partnership, to best target our resources.





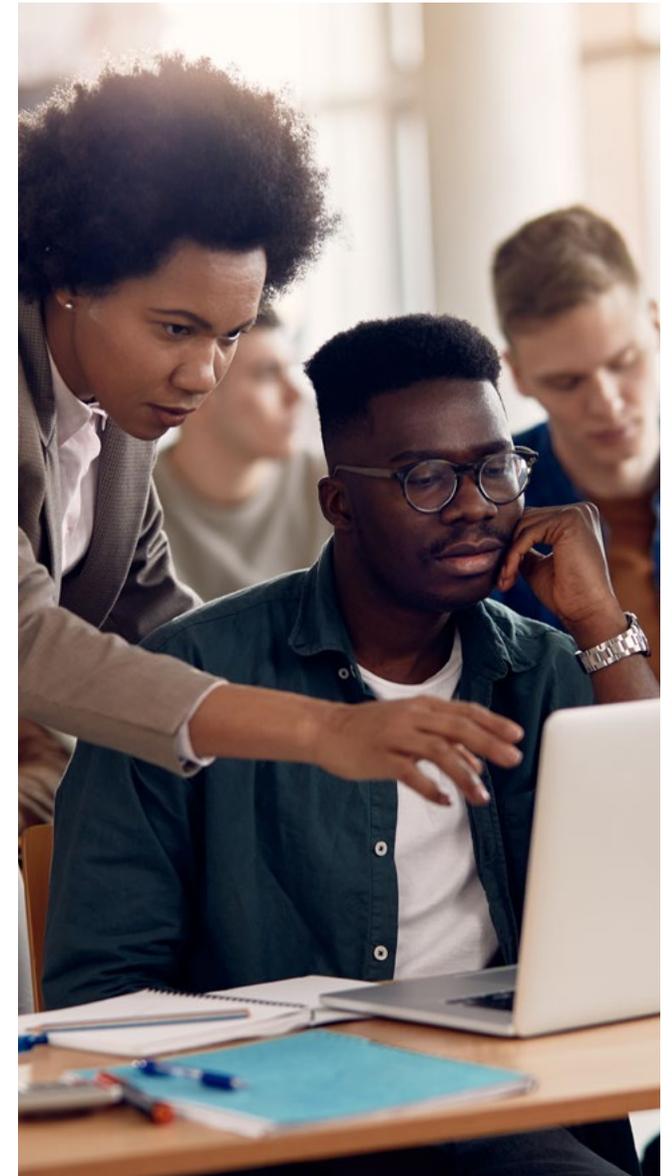
4. Develop creative school approaches

We will develop creative approaches to working in partnership with schools, placing schools at the forefront of our early help approach.

Lambeth's network of schools are uniquely placed to identify when a child and family needs help. We will develop new and creative approaches within schools, and in partnership to ensure children and families access the help they need.

To deliver on this priority we will...

- ▶ Establish a working group of local schools to trial new models of early help in schools and review learning
- ▶ Share best practice on approaches across all of Lambeth's Schools network, developing a communications campaign
- ▶ Review the support provided to schools by Lambeth's Early help service and develop a refreshed outreach offer to schools.





Governance

Lambeth Safeguarding Children's Partnership will be responsible for overseeing the delivery of this strategy. Its membership is representative of the partners delivering early help, enabling it to resolve strategic issues. The partnership will appoint a sub group to monitor progress and will formally review the strategy on an annual basis.

There will be 4 working groups to deliver against each priority of the strategy.





KEY INDICATORS FOR MEASURING SUCCESS

TARGET TREND	MEASURE
1. Improve access to information, advice, and support	
	Number of early help assessments per 10,000 of the population
	Number of families making progress against their early help plan
	Number of referrals to children’s social care that result in No Further Action
	Number of families requiring further Early Help Interventions within 6 months of closure
2. Empower Workforces and Communities	
	Number of workshop/training sessions held within quarter
	Number of early help assessments undertaken by early help partnership (recorded on partnership portal)
	Recorded satisfaction from families regarding tier 2 support
	Recorded satisfaction from families regarding tier 3 support
3. Develop Effective Systems and Infrastructure	
	Number of visits to Lambeth’s web-based directory of services
	Number of families where progress has been met against the Supporting Families Criteria
	Number of partners contributing data into the Supporting Families dashboard
4. Develop creative school approaches	
	Number of early help assessments undertaken within a schools setting
	Number of schools participating in Locality panels



With thanks to partners involved in developing this strategy:

Better Start Lambeth

Triangle Nursery

Holmewood Nursery

Home Start Lambeth

Loughborough Primary School

The Elmgreen School

Saint Gabriel's College

Lansdowne School

Guys and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust

Lambeth Education and Learning Service

Lambeth Youth Offending Services