

**TITLE OF REPORT:** Early Help Strategy

**REPORT OF:** Caroline O'Neill, Strategic Director, Care Wellbeing and Learning

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### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Early Help Strategy will bring together many strands of work to create a vision for the future where families are resilient and supported within their local community with reduced need for specialist intervention, by developing flexible evidence based early interventions, which are delivered in a timely way.

The aim of the Strategy is to empower families, professionals from all sectors and local communities to work collaboratively to make Gateshead the best place in which to live and work.

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#### **Background**

1. Nationally there is increasing evidence that supporting children and families at the earliest opportunity has significant impact in improving life chances and increasing outcomes into adulthood.
2. Reducing the need for high cost statutory and child protection services is evident in managing the sustainability of resources and changing expectations.
3. Gateshead's Early Help Strategy is a key opportunity to refocus the vision to delivering the right response by the right service at the right time.
4. Service providers will work together to ensure the needs of vulnerable children, young people and families are identified at the earliest opportunity and that the needs are appropriately assessed and met by working effectively together.
5. Early Help services should be shaped by the views and experiences of the children, young people and families building resilience and increasing their capacity to manage challenging circumstances before issues escalate and poor outcomes develop.
6. An early help approach offers families more than a single solution to deal with problems. There will be less duplication and fewer gaps in early help service provision.

7. Early help interventions focus on reducing the risk and promoting a strength based model in the child, young person and the family within a cultural context.

### **Policy Context**

8. The Early Help Strategy is part of Gateshead Council's Corporate Plan and is designed to develop a safe, sustainable partnership approach to providing early intervention and prevention services.
9. The Strategy builds on the good work already being delivered as part of an overarching framework to deliver a coherent and consistent early help offer in which everyone understands the pathways available and their role in delivering services.
10. The Early Help Strategy has been developed within the context of national and local policy. Over the last five years reviews have demonstrated the economic and social value of prevention and early intervention programmes and ways of working.
11. 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013' and Professor Eileen Munro's report on the future of safeguarding (2011) promote the importance of early help within the wider safeguarding context.
12. The Early Help Strategy follows the ethos of FamiliesGateshead by developing a model of early help for families which key partner agencies understand their role and are accountable for the delivery of services.
13. The Common Assessment Framework will be used consistently as the early help assessment of needs and strengths, taking a need led rather than service led approach.
14. Information sharing will be strengthened so that partners have access to information they need to effectively work together.

### **Recommendation:**

15. It is requested that the Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider the draft Early Help Strategy and make any recommendations or changes.

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