

Strengthening Early Help

NCB's response to the Independent Review of Children's Social Care 'Call for Ideas'

Summary

December 2021



What are our ideas?

To support the Independent Review of Children's Social Care, NCB has developed eight ideas for strengthening Early Help:

- #1 – Clearly define Early Help in law as a set of multi-agency processes designed to meet need at the earliest possible point
- #2 – Improve the Early Help workforce by supporting improved training routes and qualification levels
- #3 Invest in research that uses large linked datasets to understand what Early Help support is most helpful to which families under which circumstances
- #4 – Put coproduction at the heart of Early Help; Early Help will only be sought out by children and families when they have been fully involved in the design of the approach
- #5 – Improve information and data sharing for Early Help; this is a key barrier to identifying and meeting needs early
- #6 – Embed Early Help in the operation of Integrated Care Boards; the Health and Care Bill creates a powerful opportunity to embed Early Help into the operation of the new NHS structures
- #7 – Develop a multi-agency accountability framework for Early Help; a joint outcomes framework for multi-agency safeguarding partners would drive delivery of our Early Help vision
- #8 – A new commitment to funding services that are accessed through Early Help; HM Treasury should increase funding for local authorities and statutory partners to support implementation of the Early Help duty

The full NCB 'call for ideas' response is published on our website [here](#) and provides greater detail on each individual idea.



What impact do we hope these ideas will achieve?

Our vision for Early Help is a multi-agency framework designed to meet babies, children, young people, and families' needs at the earliest possible point. True coproduction of the Early Help approach would improve the engagement of children and families and reduce the unhelpful conflation of Early Help with child protection.

A new statutory duty would create an unequivocal definition of Early Help and provide both clarity and accountability for the roles and responsibilities of local partners. It would signal a renewed national focus on meeting the needs of families by ensuring processes are in place for providing Early Help across agencies and deliver an impetus for local transformation.

The vision would enable Early Help to be embraced and embedded across the health, education, SEND, social care, and policing sectors. With improved joint accountability and commissioning across agencies and enhanced arrangements for sharing and pooling information. The expansion of Family Hubs would also contribute to improved access and availability of Early Help services.

NCB believes the strengthening of Early Help could be the catalyst for change in driving improvement in children's social care and we hope the Review will account for this in their final recommendations.



United for a better childhood

The National Children's Bureau brings people and organisations together to drive change in society and deliver a better childhood for the UK. We interrogate policy, uncover evidence and develop better ways of supporting children and families.

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