

London Borough of Brent
Report from the Director of Social Services
EXECUTIVE – 21ST JULY 2003

For Action

Name of Wards Affected

ALL

FAMILY SUPPORT STRATEGY

1.0 SUMMARY

This report sets out the Children's Services Family Support Strategy (Appendix 1) which has as its vision the attainment of an integrated multi-disciplinary approach to supporting families.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive Committee agree the strategy.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Family support services in 2003-2004 will continue to be provided through Service Level Agreements totalling £75k. The SLA with the Family Service Unit will terminate in September 2003 yielding £60k savings in 2003/4 which will be invested in existing family support services.

Family Support Services in 2004-2005 will be dependent on reconfiguration of day nursery services, use of the resources previously available for the Family Service Unit (£122k p.a) and resource contributions from partner agencies such as Health and Education. There is also a growth bid to be considered in this year's budget planning process. An estimated total of £450k revenue costs would be needed to establish a Family Resource/Children's Centre for Brent. Any shortfall would have to be met from government grant funding such as the Mental Health Grant and Children's Fund.

4.0 STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

Staff in existing Social Services provision are to be consulted on a reconfiguration of day nursery provision with the intention of using their family support skills in any new family resource provision.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

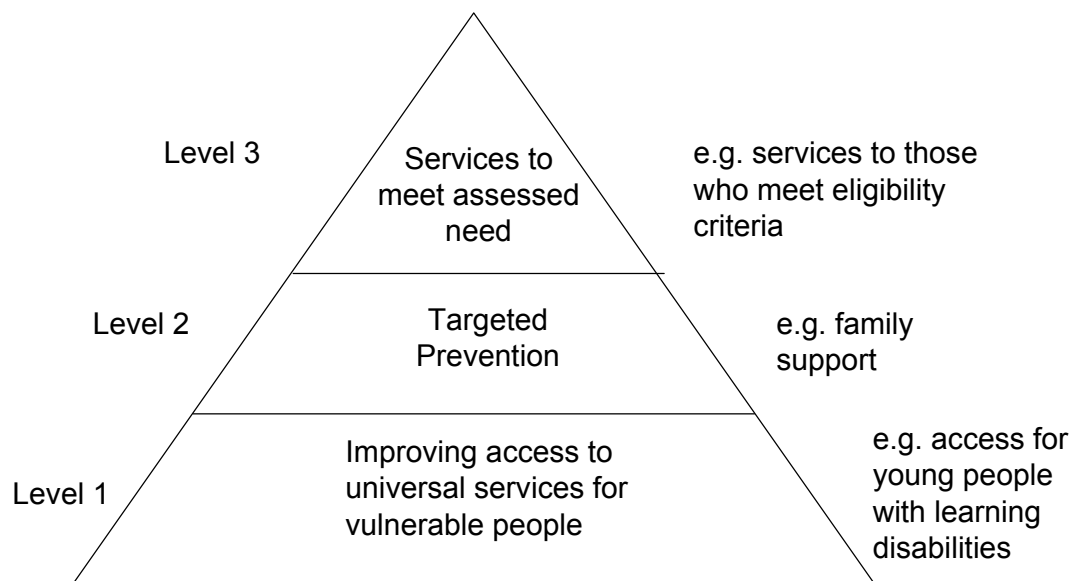
The Children Act 1989 requires local authorities to make such provision as the local authority considers appropriate to provide a range of services for children in need within their area while they are living with their families. These services may include, amongst others, advice, guidance and counselling or occupational social cultural or recreational activities.

Local authorities are also required to provide such family centres as they consider appropriate in relation to children within their area where families may receive such advice guidance counselling or other specified services.

6.0 DETAIL

- 6.1 The Family Support Strategy forms part of the overarching Children and Young People Strategic Plan which incorporates other inter-agency strategic plans such as the Behaviour Improvement Plan, the Youth Justice Plan and the Identification, Referral and Tracking Project Plan. All these plans aim to support children, young people and their families in order that their life prospects and outcomes are improved. It is a preventive strategy to ensure that families are included in the communities they live in, family breakdown is prevented and services are targeted to families experiencing difficulties.
- 6.2 In addition, the Local Strategic Partnership has responsibility for a Local Preventative Strategy (LPS) for Children at Risk which needs to be in place before April 2004. The LPS co-ordinates all strategic planning across all agencies in Brent that work with children and young people and their families or carers. The final draft will be available for consultation from September 2003.
- 6.3 In Brent there are a range of initiatives that provide support to families. The CAMHS range includes three Sure Starts, the Children's Fund, On Track Partnership, CAMHS and service level agreements with voluntary organisations.
- 6.4 In addition, Brent Children's Services provide services to children with high priority needs. The limited family support service we presently offer is social workers and family support workers, day care provision and parenting groups.
- 6.5 The Family Support Strategy aims to provide a co-ordinated strategic approach to family support in Brent. It prioritises our needs in the context of central government policy and local demands.
- 6.6 Inspections of Children's Services and the Joint Review have recommended the development of a Family Support Strategy to outline the existing family support provision and our plans to further develop these services.

6.7 The overall shape of service we seek to deliver is a 3 tier model.



Currently statutory services are provided to Level 3. We provide funding to voluntary organisations and support to other agencies to maximise grant opportunities for Level 2 targeted prevention. Such initiatives include Sure Start, Children's Fund and Quality Protects.

- 6.8 In June 2003, responsibility for children's services moved from the Department of Health to the Department for Education and Skills. Margaret Hodge, the new Minister for Children is the lead minister for all services for children and young people including Teenage Pregnancy. Youth Justice services remain the responsibility of the Home Office.
- 6.9 We also have in place eligibility criteria to assess children and young people and their families for services. We then prioritise their needs and decide the level of service to be provided. The eligibility criteria, which is tightly drawn, means that family support services are only provided to those in greatest need as the demand exceeds the resources we have available.
- 6.10 Opportunities for extending our activity into Levels One and Two will depend on future central government funding initiatives, reconfiguration of existing services in Social Services and the potential to reconfigure family support staff across partner agencies.
- 6.11 The Government Green Paper on Children at Risk due to be published in the summer of 2003 is likely to indicate the future direction for Children Services especially in the area of Children's Trusts.
- 6.12 Children's Trusts are multi-agency bodies that would be responsible for commissioning and delivering part or all of children's services. Brent partners considered this opportunity last year and decided to delay any reorganisation

at the time. All partners agreed that creating stability in their organisations was a priority and that an evaluation of the Children's Trusts trailblazers would assist Brent when planning a Children's Trust in the future.

- 6.13 The Brent Family Support Strategy presents proposals for future developments for a Family Support Service. These proposals will need to be fully considered by the Family Support Strategy Group (a sub-group of Children and Young People Priority Action Group – CYPPAG) in light of the forthcoming Green Paper.

7.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- Rebuilding for the Future – a Strategy for Change for Brent Social Services – September 2001
- Social Services for Children – our Policy - January 2002
- Children in Need – Social Services Care and Support

Anyone wishing to see the above papers should contact:

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