

**Report for:** Cabinet 18<sup>th</sup> April,2023

**Title:** To approve the Haringey Early Years Strategy 2023-26

**Report authorised by :** Jane Edwards, Assistant Director, Schools and Learning

**Lead Officer:** Nick Hewlett, Principal Advisor for Early Years Quality,  
[nick.hewlett@haringey.gov.uk](mailto:nick.hewlett@haringey.gov.uk)

**Ward(s) affected:** All

**Report for Key/**

**Non Key Decision:** Yes

## **1. Describe the issue under consideration**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet's agreement to approve Haringey's Early Years Strategy.
- 1.2 The strategy has been developed in consultation with key stakeholders, including parents, the early years sector and professional partners.
- 1.3 The implementation of an Early Years Strategy is subject to statutory consultation and therefore permission is being sought from Cabinet to approve its publication.

## **2. Cabinet Member Introduction**

- 2.1 It is well-established that a child's early years experiences can influence their development and outcomes in life. Providing high quality early education and childcare, and ensuring there is early intervention for children who are vulnerable or who have special needs is therefore of great importance, and is a priority for this administration. The Council has a strong record in directly providing this high quality provision, and of supporting other providers in this work, with over 98% of settings either good or outstanding. A strategy which reflects the many dimensions of early years and childcare, which shapes and strengthens the service, and which supports children, parents, carers and families is long overdue. I am pleased to bring this report and the draft strategy to Cabinet.

## **3. Recommendations**

- 3.1 That Cabinet approve the publication of Haringey's Early Years Strategy 2023-2026.

## **4. Reasons for decision**

- 4.1 Our Early Years strategy reflects our ambition for an integrated and better co-ordinated approach across all services for young children, their families and carers. Through this strategy, our vision is that we develop an improved early years offer which ensures families can access the services they need to enable young children to have the best start in life and long-term foundations to thrive.

Following the Early Years review stakeholders felt that the lack of a dedicated Early Years Strategy led to inconsistency of approach and a reduced focus on the importance of intervening in the early years.

- 4.2 The strategy will give a clear focus on early years and provide a distinction between Early Years and Early Help. The strategy lays out clear objectives and outcomes for children and young people in the borough, and how we can work co-productively and in partnership to arrive at these outcomes.
- 4.3 The Early Years strategy would ensure that there is more focus on the developmental benefits of prevention and universal support in the early years.

## **5. Alternative options considered**

- 5.1 The alternative was to continue without a strategy, however a strategy was deemed necessary to provide a clear pathway to improving outcomes for the youngest children in the early years and facilitating co-production and partnership working across the early years sector. The strategy will enable us to implement a robust monitoring process, tracking our progress in working towards the agreed aims and priorities.
- 5.2 Funding for early years provision could be at risk without the outcomes, priorities and benefits being clearly structured through a strategy.

## **6. Background information**

### **6.1. Consultation Process**

A period of consultation was held between the 1<sup>st</sup> of September and 14<sup>th</sup> of November 2022. Two separate consultation surveys were used; one for parents, which received 766 responses, and one for providers, which received 110 responses. The consultation specifically addressed several key areas, including communication, SEND, healthcare and universal childcare.

This feedback has been incorporated into the draft strategy, informing its strategic aims and priorities. This has included:

- Prioritising modes of communication which make information most accessible to families and providers

- Renewing and strengthening families' links with Children's Centres, to maximise support for families, especially those most in need of additional support
- Continuing to raise awareness and increase take up of free for two and universal childcare, allowing as many families as possible to access high-quality, affordable childcare, with many parents and carers identifying cost as the main barrier to families accessing childcare
- Working in partnership with providers and educators to both evolve and upskill our existing early years workforce, and to develop a sustainable source of new practitioners in Haringey, to address the significant staffing challenges described by providers
- Incorporating families' and providers' feedback on supporting children with SEND, and particularly a growing number of children with additional speech and language needs, through the development of a new SLCN pathway.

An Early Years Strategic Partnership Group has been established, with representatives from across the early years sector, including health, SEND, and parental representation. This group will be responsible for monitoring the progress of each aim and priority.

## 6.2. **Funding**

- The delivery of the Early Years Strategy will depend on existing funding streams and resources.
- The SEND Review is considering the banding system and its funding, which will also contribute to funding the implementation of some aspects of the strategy.
- Other funding bids to resource the strategy will be explored.
- We are awaiting more detail regarding Government policy on the expansion of the universal childcare offer, announced in the most recent budget.

## 7. **Contribution to Corporate Delivery Plan 2022-2024 High Level Strategic Outcomes?**

- Best start in life: the first few years of every child's life will give them the long-term foundations to thrive
- Happy childhood: all children across the borough will be happy and healthy as they grow up, feeling safe and secure in their family, networks and communities
- Every young person, whatever their background, has a pathway to success for the future
- All adults are able to live healthy and fulfilling lives, with dignity, staying active and connected in their communities
- Strong communities where people look out for and care for one another.

## **8. Statutory Officers comments**

### **8.1 Finance**

The recommendation to publish Haringey Early Years Strategy 2023-2026 will not give rise to any financial implications. Any future decisions arising as a result of implementing the strategy will be considered as they arise and met from existing resources or included in the MTFS process, as appropriate.

### **8.2. Procurement**

The content of this report is noted.

### **8.3 Head of Legal and Governance**

The Head of Legal and Governance has been consulted in the preparation of this report.

The proposed Early Years Strategy would enable the Council to deliver on its statutory obligations under the Childcare Act 2006, in particular, relating to its general duties to improve the well-being of young children and reduce inequalities between young children in their area (Section 1); and the specific duty to make arrangements to secure that early childhood services in their area are provided in an integrated manner which is calculated to – a) facilitate access to those services, and b) maximise the benefit of those services to parents, prospective parents and young people (Section 3).

### **8.4 Equality**

The Council has a Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act (2010) to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share those protected characteristics and people who do not
- Foster good relations between people who share those characteristics and people who do not.

The three parts of the duty applies to the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion/faith, sex and sexual orientation. Marriage and civil partnership status applies to the first part of the duty. Although it is not enforced in legislation as a protected characteristic, Haringey Council treats socioeconomic status as a local protected characteristic.

The strategy recognises that children under five, particularly those born just before or within the pandemic, and their parents have been disproportionately

disadvantaged by the closure or reduction of services during the pandemic and that the long term impacts that are not yet understood. It also recognises that lower income families, amongst whom Haringey's Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) families are disproportionately represented and will have been even more greatly affected.

There is a strong focus on equity and inclusion which runs through the strategy which emphasises access and outreach, and achieving more equitable outcomes.

It can be anticipated that the Early Years Strategy will have a positive impact on residents in Haringey who share the protected characteristics noted above to the extent that the strategy's objectives are achieved.

**9. Use of Appendices**

Appendix 1 - Early Years Strategy

**10. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985**