

Prevention and Early Intervention

1 National Strategic Context

- 1.1 The Children Act 2004 and its accompanying policy documents (Every Child Matters) is committed to using universal and targeted provision to improve ‘prevention’ and ‘early intervention’ activities that address ‘risks’ in all areas of children’s lives.
- 1.2 ‘The goal is to achieve a better balance between so-called ‘front-end’ services – prevention and early intervention aimed at averting problems in the first place or nipping them in the bud if they start to develop – and more ‘heavy end’ and therefore resource intensive provision – treatment and social action intended to remedy serious difficulties and reduce the negative impact that those with difficulties have on others.
- 1.3 Current refocusing is concerned with providing services for *all* children and with orientating provision towards improved outcomes – reduced impairment to development, better quality of life, combating social exclusion – so moving away from the focus on processes and outputs.’¹

1.4 Table 1: Current refocusing:

1	Refocusing from	Refocusing to
	Service-led strategies	Needs-led strategies
	Process and procedures necessary for an efficient bureaucracy	Practical support for practical needs offered at the time children and families can benefit
	Reliance on tradition and practice knowledge	Use of national evidence to improve clinical practice and local evidence to better understand local needs
	Services designed <i>for</i> users	Services designed <i>with</i> users

(Refocusing Children’s Services towards Prevention: Lessons from the Literature – Dartington Social research Unit p17)

1.5 Therefore, it can be seen that central to the legislation is the emphasis on improving outcomes for all children and young people and integral to this is the active involvement of the service users as a means to determine their needs and shape the service(s) accordingly. Moreover, the longer-term economic benefits can clearly be seen in relation to the ‘potential’ savings that could be achieved via the investment in ‘robust’ preventative and early intervention activities (invest to save).

2 Bradford District Context

2.1 The Council and its partners signed up to their **Big Idea local joined up services focussed on prevention**. **The Big Idea** will involve interagency working; co location where appropriate of professionals in geographically based multi agency teams, in extended schools, Children’s Centres or other local settings; common processes; a lead professional to coordinate the response where more than one agency is involved; and joint planning and commissioning.

¹ Refocusing Children’s Services towards Prevention: Lessons from the Literature – Dartington Social research Unit p8

- 2.2 Bringing people together promotes shared vision and values, strengthens inter-professional relationships and creates opportunities to share knowledge and good practice. This joined up approach, which in many cases will be a matter of extending and reinforcing current practice, will facilitate early intervention and prevention. The aim is to work with the child and their family to reduce vulnerability to poor outcomes.
- 2.3 Jointly commissioned services will reflect the principles of integrated front line delivery organised around the child and family rather than around professional boundaries or existing agencies. Indeed “Narrowing the Gap” April 2007 (reference: http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/assets/Internet_Content/Shared_Content/Files/2007/apr/narrowingthegap.pdf) promotes the idea that all service developments and recommissioning should be undertaken in a partnership context
- 2.4 Although this paper concentrates on intervention at the first sign of risk, **Prevention** is seen as a feature of all service provision to children and young people whatever the complexity of identified need. Every Child Matters is about improving services for all children and young people but has particular regard for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged and in closing the gap in outcomes between such children and young people and their peers. Two examples of this emphasis are the duties on the Council to promote the educational attainment of Looked After Children and to make arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

3 Definitions

- 3.1 In the context of children’s services, **prevention** is generally considered in terms of preventing social need or psychological problems.
- 3.2 **Early Intervention** refers to responses early in the development of a social need or social and psychological problems. It may operate within mainstream settings but includes the delivery of targeted services. Interventions may be delivered on a one-to-one basis, or via group or family work. Difficulties may be short or long-term, but the child will continue to access majority mainstream provision. Early intervention implies that problems are already beginning to manifest themselves and action is needed to prevent them becoming serious or worse.
- 3.3 **Universal** - Mainstream, open access provision. Some children may need low level additional support to enable them to access universal services.
- 3.4 **Diversionsary** - Here the focus is on identifying risk factors and providing activities which will prevent problems developing.
Thus prevention strategies are likely to focus on whole populations.

4 Service Implications

- 4.1 ‘Since 1997, the government has identified social exclusion as a major policy priority and a wide range of government initiatives have been developed, targeted towards children and young people deemed to be ‘at risk’ of social exclusion.’² Inherent within these programmes has been a focus on reducing risk factors, building resilience, and promoting protective factors across various settings (family, schools, communities and the individual child/young person).

² *NECF – Developing Preventative Practices: The Experiences of Children, Young People and their Families in the Children’s Fund p8*

4.2 The premise of such activity is to affect children and young people’s ‘trajectories’ or ‘developmental pathways’ through prevention and early intervention mechanisms as a means to promote positive outcomes and enable them to achieve their full potential both at an individual and societal level.

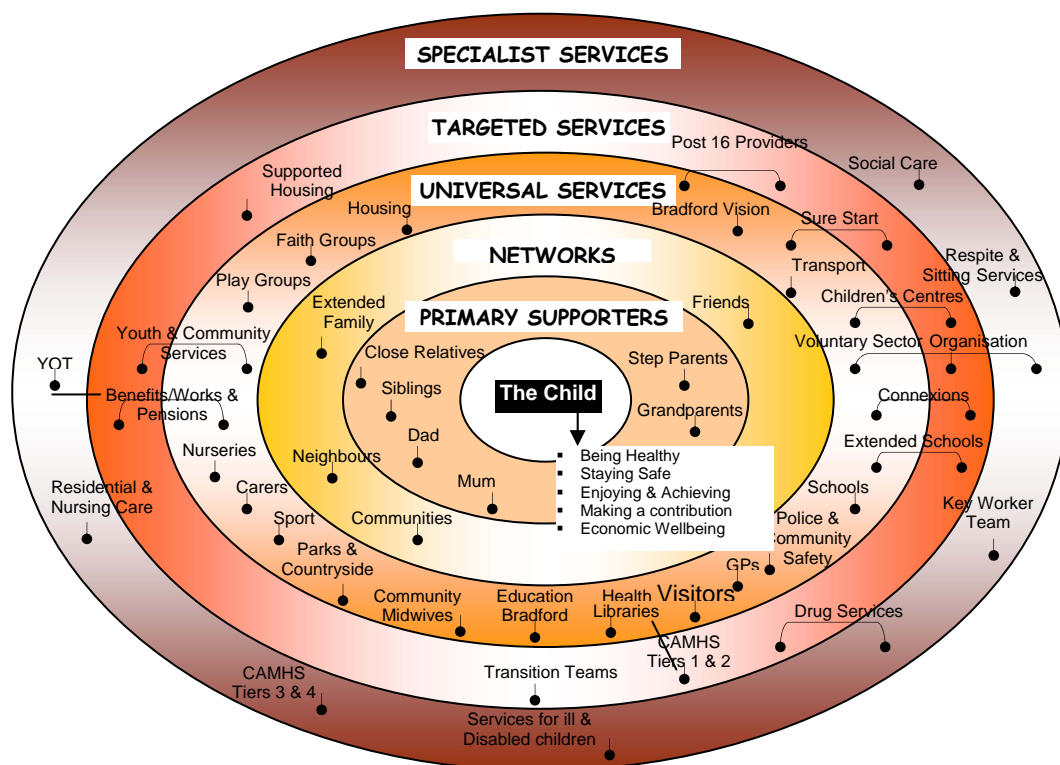
Ideal characteristics of multi-agency, negotiated practice with children and young people (Edwards 2004)	Factors which help to promote resilience in children and young people (Newman 2002)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A holistic focus on children and young people; • Following a child’s trajectory; • Ability to talk across professional boundaries; • An understanding of what other professionals can contribute to a responsive package of protection built around the child and young person; • Acknowledgement of the capacity of service users to help tailor services; • An understanding that changing the trajectories of children and young people involves reconfiguring of opportunities available to them, as well as building confidence and skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong social support networks; • The presence of at least one unconditionally supportive parent or parent substitute; • A committed mentor or other person from outside the family; • Positive school experiences; • A sense of mastery and belief that one’s own efforts can make a difference; • Participation in a range of extra-curricula activities; • A capacity to reframe adversities so that the beneficial as well as the damaging effects are recognised; • An ability – or opportunity – to ‘make a difference’ by helping others or through work; • Not to be excessively sheltered from challenging situations which provide opportunities to develop coping skills

4.3 As can be seen within the examples above, core elements or themes that are inherent throughout the process are; **identifying needs, multi-agency/partnership working** and **active participation** and support parents to enable their children to reach their full potential all of which contribute to the overall ‘impact’ of service delivery in terms of delivering improved outcomes for children and young people. These themes are also integral to the future joint commissioning arrangements and will be central for evaluative purposes in determining a service’s effectiveness in delivery.

4.4 Having discussed the underpinnings of prevention it is necessary to investigate how these manifest themselves into actual models which inform delivery

5 The Bradford Model

Child Centred Model



5.1 Within the concentric circles the child is clearly placed at the centre and in line with the concepts of raising resilience to deliver improved outcomes the child or young person's primary support networks (parents/carers) are the first link. As can be seen this is then followed by wider networks and then feeds into universal and early interventions for more vulnerable children and young people through to more specialist services for more complex needs. It is the responsibility of all agencies to ensure that they engage with children, young people, parents, carers, families and the wider community to ensure that services are appropriate and based on identified need(s).

6 Conclusion

- 6.1 This **preventative strategy** will enable services to intervene early at the point prior to or where things first start to go wrong in children's lives. The preventive framework includes mechanisms for ongoing needs analysis that will enable us to plan ahead, identify and respond to risk factors and build in protective measures.
- 6.2 The Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership agreed the following principles in order to achieve their stated vision:

Our Services for children and young people will:

- 1 Be centered on the needs of children and young people
- 2 Listen and respond to children, young people and their families

- 3** Empower children and young people to contribute to shaping services
- 4** Focus on priorities
- 5** Focus on prevention
- 6** Be equitable, inclusive and non discriminatory
- 7** Work together in an integrated way
- 8** Listen to staff and front line managers
- 9** Provide clear leadership and direction
- 10** Share and learn from good practice and lessons learnt

6.3 The impact of this strategy will continue to be evaluated and changes made as appropriate.

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