

Report No.

London Borough of Bromley

PART ONE - PUBLIC

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**Decision Maker:** CHILDREN EDUCATION AND FAMILIES PDS

**Date:** JANUARY 2021

**Decision Type:** Non-Urgent Non-Executive Non-Key

**Title:** EARLY INTERVENTION AND FAMILY SUPPORT  
COVID UPDATE

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**Chief Officer:** Janet Bailey  
Director; Children Education and Families

**Ward:** Wards

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1. Reason for report

1.1 This report is an information briefing on the work of Early Intervention and Family Support and the services provided to families during COVID since 1 April 2020.

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2. **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

2.1 The Children Education and Families PDS Committee is invited to note the content of the report.

2.2 The Children Education and Families Portfolio Holder is recommended to note the content of the report.

## Impact on Vulnerable Adults and Children

1. Summary of Impact: Positive
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## Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: Not Applicable
  2. BBB Priority: Children and Young People Excellent Council Safe Bromley Healthy Bromley Regeneration:
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## Financial

1. Cost of proposal: N/A
  2. Ongoing costs: Not Applicable: within existing Budget
  3. Budget head/performance centre: N/A
  4. Total current budget for this head: £ N/A
  5. Source of funding: N/A
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## Personnel

1. Number of staff (current and additional): N/A
  2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours: N/A
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## Legal

1. Legal Requirement: N/A
  2. Call-in: Applicable
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## Procurement

1. Summary of Procurement Implications: N/A
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## Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected): N/A
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## Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? Not Applicable
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments:

### **3. COMMENTARY**

3.1 Early Intervention and Family Support Services sits within Children's Social Care. The umbrella of EIFS encompasses both statutory and non-statutory services, as well as being the lead for Bromley's Tackling Troubled Families work, and more recently the strategic responsibility for Domestic Violence and Abuse (intergenerational). Consequently, EIFS comprises of a number of different services / programmes as listed below;

- Children and Family Centres
- Bromley Children Project Family Support and Parenting Practitioner Team (FSPP Team)
- Parenting offer
- The CAF Team
- Family Contact Centres
- Information Advice and Support Service (IASS)
- Domestic Violence and Abuse / VAWG Strategic Lead Officer
- Reducing Parental Conflict Programme

3.2 This paper will provide a snapshot of some of the work undertaken since the initial national lockdown in March 2020, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to ensure the safety of our families accessing services and our staff / partner agencies providing services, the offer across the service has changed; some activities have had to pause, some have continued throughout, and new activities and services or ways of delivering services have developed.

#### **3.3 Children and Family Centres**

- 3.3.1 Work was undertaken with support from the central COVID Team to make all six of our Children and Family Centres, and our offices in the Central Library, COVID safe. The measures in place were approved and resulted in the sites reopening to staff and partners, and families for specific restricted activities only, in late April/early May 2020.
- 3.3.2 We have offered 'by appointment only' health appointments for health Visiting, Midwifery and some mental health services such as the perinatal team, including during the National Lockdown (tier 5 = 'T5') periods.
- 3.3.3 We developed a range of 'safe bubble' Learn and Play sessions lead by our staff, again by appointment only, for our most vulnerable and isolated families. These have run throughout the pandemic with the exception of during T5.
- 3.3.4 In addition to the Safe Bubble Learn and Play sessions which have been for a limited number of families due to the safety measures, we have developed a number of Learn and Play packs. These have been delivered to families via a 'doorstop drop' service which we developed inhouse and within COVID safety requirements.
- 3.3.5 We have continued to be an issuer for Healthy Start Vitamins and to support families during the pandemic have delivered via our 'doorstop drop' service.
- 3.3.6 Our Swap-Shop offer has continued without the 'swap' element – we have delivered bundles of clothes etc. but have not been accepting donations during COVID. Any bundles requested have been delivered to families via our 'doorstop drop' service.
- 3.3.7 We retained our Foodbank Voucher status and worked with the Foodbank at the beginning of this pandemic to adapt their paper system to an E Vouchers system which was then adopted.

- 3.3.8 At Christmas we undertook our usual role alongside donators of gifts, hampers and turkeys, to ensure these items were directed to our vulnerable families and again, delivered these via our 'doorstop drop' service.
- 3.3.9 During COVID our work with the Gypsy Romany and Traveller community has continued. Our site visits to the Star Lane site continued throughout (except during T5) and included requests for doorstep drops of Learn and Play materials. With the support of the Site Manager and residents, we have been granted permission to expand this service to include the Maidstone Road site after this period of T5 ceases. Supported by colleagues at the Depot, we are using their van and have purchased tents, chairs and cushions to create a recognisable 'space' weather permitting, to set-up when we are on site.
- 3.3.10 During COVID we have been working with colleagues under the Bromley All Age Autism Working Group and developing our centres to be Centres of ASC excellent. Part of this work has seen the development and introduction of Self sooth boxes for families with a child who needs to access additional tools to enable them to access the provision.
- 3.3.11 We were thrilled to hear in the summer that all six Children and Family Centres achieved their Healthy Early years London Silver Award. This work was support by Bromley's Early Years Quality Lead who provided support and audited our applications. Work to achieve Gold will start in 12 months as one of the Gold requirements is to submit a log to demonstrate how Silver has been embedded. This includes work that links to Bromley's Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP).
- 3.3.12 We have also taken this time to self-assess and reflect on the issues that have presented during the last 12 months. The question of diversity and inclusion and making this real has been a key focus. We embraced the challenges, reviewed our resources and where necessary updated these to reflect our communities in Bromley.
- 3.3.13 Our Social Media presence has grown from strength to strength; we have 995 FB followers, and 342 Instagram followers. We have published 470 posts on Facebook and 154 in Instagram. We have used these to re-post information, advice and guidance from Public Health, specific support services such as Bromley and Croydon Women's Aid for DVA support, and increased our video /play activity library. Our 'Booking your Learn and Play' post reached 1,630 people and our videos have had over 3,500 hits. In addition to this, we used these platforms to promote and demonstrate the local authority's commitment to all our residents e.g. during October, for Black History Month, we posted daily in Facebook and Instagram information on unsung historical and current day achievers to educate and inspire. We are currently working with Corporate Communications Team to utilise Bromley's YouTube chanel.
- 3.3.14 We have developed with colleagues in Bromley Adult Education College and run a range of safe bubble activities e.g. cookery, to run in the Children and Family centres (although not during T5) for isolated and vulnerable families.
- 3.3.15 During this period, we have supported colleagues from a range of services both within the council and partner agencies to deliver in a safe way (not during T5), face to face support to children and families especially during the summer. Some of those we have worked with are;
- CSC Children Looked After Team; activities including NEET including holiday and out of hours sessions into the evening
  - CSC Children with Disabilities Team; activities including their Summer Scheme
  - CASPA; their regular activities for children with ASD

- Hidden Harm Worker; by appointment only – appointments with young people
- CSC Safeguarding Teams; undertaking Parenting Capacity Assessments
- CSC ASYE Group; a safe space for weekly group Supervision sessions
- CSC Social workers and our own staff; a safe space for face to face meetings with families to help mitigate COVID risks whilst enabling eyes-on the children.

3.3.16 We have developed and launched a refreshed Advisory Board for the Children and Family Centres. This has increased parental involvement as well as professionals involvement. We have used Survey Monkey to support parents to engage and 26 actively engaged in our initial Board using this option. Our second Advisory board newsletter is live, and we are collecting responses.

3.3.17 We have also developed and introduced a 'Light Touch Assessment' for our Children and Family Centre Support Officers to better understand and support families on their caseloads.

3.3.18 We continue to develop the service and to look for ways to enhance, adapt and deliver support to our families. We are planning Virtual Coffee Mornings and expanding our COVID safe bubble activities, but alongside this, preparing to reopen for other group sessions / drop-ins as soon as we are in a position to safely do so on the advice and guidance of Public Health colleagues.

### **3.4 Family Support and Parenting Practitioner Team**

3.4.1 Family Support services have continued uninterrupted.

3.4.2 Visiting to families has continued, where safe to do so these have been in person visits with appropriate PPE; in the family home, the Children and Family Centres, in Schools and other community venues both inside and outside in accordance with COVID safe practice guidance. Where this has not been possible, virtual visits have been used, with staff developing creative ways to undertake direct work during these virtual visits.

### **3.5 Parenting Offer**

3.5.1 Unfortunately, classroom delivery of parenting courses has not been possible due to COVID Restrictions. This left a gap in our core provision. We developed and introduced an interim solution, a Parenting Hotline. This is operational Monday to Friday 9am to 4:30pm, with answerphone for calls outside this window. We have advertised by word of mouth and Facebook/Instagram as well as via emails to colleagues and partner agencies. The service is being used and has become a route for parents to self-refer into the FSPP Team.

3.5.2 During this period, we have developed a range of online parenting standalone seminars covering a number of topics; Boundaries, Relationships, Communications, New to Parenting ('NAP'), ASC bedtime, ASC anxiety, Parenting Styles. More seminars are being developed, and prioritised by parental requests.

3.5.3 We have also developed 'short-course' options, which require more commitment from a parent as they span 6 weeks, for some of our most popular parenting programmes; Strengthening Families Strengthening Communities which focuses on parents of older children and young people ('SFSC'), and the New Forest Parenting Programme ('NFPP') for parents of children with /likely to have ADHD.

3.5.4 During the period October – December 2020, 91 parents accessed these seminars, including 43 who completed NFPP and 19 who completed SFSC short courses.

### **3.6 CAF Team (Common Assessment Framework)**

- 3.6.1 The CAF Team have continued to offer their full range of services including contributing to the MASH team and supporting Lead Professionals whether inhouse, school-based or from other partners agencies.
- 3.6.2 Where face to face meetings have been safely arranged by the Lead professional, e.g. in some schools, and the CAF team have been asked to Chair, these meetings have gone ahead.
- 3.6.3 Where Lead professionals have sought CAF support and been unable to host a virtual TAC Meeting, the CAF team have organised and hosted these to ensure that the CAF plan remains focused and on track.
- 3.6.4 The CAF training offer has continued with all training moving to a virtual platform. This has enabled new staff joining the wider Children's workforce to access and understand the 'early help' approach used in Bromley.

### **3.7 Family Contact Centres**

- 3.7.1 Work was undertaken with support from the central COVID Team to make both of our Family Contact Centres COVID safe. The measures in place were approved and resulted in the sites reopening to staff and families to enable safe supervised contact to resume from July 2020. The provision of supervised contact continued throughout this period with the exception of T5, when virtual contact arrangements were put in place.
- 3.7.2 During the initial COVID Lockdown, staff were redirected to support the COVID Helpline teams.

### **3.8 IASS**

- 3.8.1 Business as usual has continued and the IASS team have continued to support families in their meetings with professionals and at SENDIST Tribunals. This has been both virtually and in person. Our team of six Independent Volunteer Supports have also continued to give up their time, energy and expertise to support our families.
- 3.8.2 As part of a grant from the Council for Disabled Children, and in order to achieve the statutory 'minimum standards' the team have been developing a Website and during COVID this important innovation has continued. The site is on schedule to go live before 31 March 2021.

### **3.9 DVA VAWG Strategic Lead**

- 3.9.1 Prior to and during COVID an enormous amount of development work has been undertaken to reinvigorate and develop Bromley's offer in relation to Domestic Violence and Abuse. A number of significant milestones have been achieved;
- Introduction of the Blue Butterfly cards to support victims of DVA – 10,000 were produced and distributed across the wider partner workforce for professionals to give to victims/survivors
  - A DVA VAWG Intergenerational Strategy has been written, with contribution sought from partners including their commitment to tackle DVA in Bromley. This is on schedule to be published before end of March 2021.
  - A new and regular DVA VAWG Newsletter has been introduced, we are on issue 4
  - A new DVA VAWG Strategic Board and DVA VAWG Operational Forum have been set up, membership agreed and inaugural meetings were held in Autumn 2020 with the first of 2021 planned for Spring 2021.

- A successful bid in partnership with MPS South BCU and Croydon, Bromley and Sutton LAs has brought a new perpetrator intervention 'DRIVE' to Bromley and this will launch in February 2021.
- Working with colleagues in Communications, a DVA page has been created on the LBB Website and is updated with relevant information.

### **3.10 Reducing Parental Conflict Programme**

- 3.10.1 Reducing Parental Conflict aims to prevent conflict developing into the more harmful and longer lasting impactful domestic abuse cycle.
- 3.10.2 Another successful bid has brought funding into Bromley to introduce the concept of Reducing Parental Conflict and to roll out a training programme and Champions' Network.
- 3.10.3 To date we have run four 'Train the Trainer' courses offering 80 places to all staff and partners working with families with the intention that those staff will then disseminate this training within their own teams and agencies.
- 3.10.4 In addition we are developing a website and a set of resources for staff to access to support interventions with families and for families to access themselves. This is on schedule to go-live by 31 March.

### **3.11 General developments**

- 3.11.1 As a service we recognise the importance of our staff without whom we would not have managed to deliver the services detailed in this paper. We have seen staff achieve promotions within and beyond the Service, and some have stepped out for a period to have babies, support the COVID teams and one has retired. This has resulted in successful recruitment exercises both virtual, and face to face (before tier 5), in order to keep the service running.
- 3.11.2 Recognising the need to keep our staff, the face of Bromley, relevant and supported we have continued with our Whole Service Training days which moved to a virtual platform this year and over 100 of the team successfully participated the event. We ran multiple sessions which included self-care for staff as well as practice workshops by working with partners across the council who supported this by delivering sessions in addition to our in-house led sessions, for example we refreshed our Prevent training.
- 3.11.3 We have shared Mental Health support and information across the team; we have several MH1stAiders, and staff receive a positive affirmation email several times a week organised by one of our Administrative Officers.
- 3.11.4 We have undertaken a self-assessment to reflect on the issues that have presented during the last 12 months. The question of diversity and inclusion, and making this real has been a key focus. We embraced the challenges, reviewed our resources and where necessary updated these to reflect our communities in Bromley. We wanted this to be visual for the families we are supporting an example being the use of 'wallpaper virtual meetings' and our Facebook and Instagram posts throughout October every day, in recognition of Black History Month, we posted information on unsung historical and current day achievers to educate and inspire.

3.11.5 Our engagement events for colleagues across Education, Health and Pre-school/Nursery settings (EEE, HEE, and PEE respectively) are all now delivered on-line and run each term. Alongside this our Introduction to EIFS monthly sessions, for anyone working within the wider children and families workforce in Bromley, have continued on-line. In addition, we have delivered 4 bespoke sessions to the newly appointed provider for the 0-19 Health Service, and five to our MASH and RAS service.

#### **4. IMPACT ON VULNERABLE ADULTS AND CHILDREN**

4.1 Our most vulnerable families and their children have continued to be supported by EIFS services throughout the COVID Pandemic, and new and different ways of both engaging and supporting them have been trialled, and where effective introduced.

4.2 There is always more that we can do, and the wider EIFS will continue to look for and exploit available opportunities to expand the reach and range of support that can be offered. EIFS have continued with the 'needs-led' approach, driven by what our families are telling us they need to ensure our resources are best placed and not wasted.

#### **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 All of the work outlined in this paper has been achieved within the existing budget and staffing allocations, or through successful bids such as Capital Bid for the development of some of our sites and grant bids to external funders e.g. MOPAC for the 'Drive' programme and DWP for the Reducing Parental Conflict programme.

5.2 There is has been no additional cost to the local authority.

#### **6. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 All of the work outlined in this paper has been achieved within the existing establishment.

6.2 All staff have been working throughout COVID and for the minority where there was a period of inactivity e.g. during National Lockdowns in March/April 2020 and currently, these staff have been redirected to support the various COVID Helpline teams set up by the local authority.

6.3 All staff have complied with COVID safety requirements and measures to ensure their safety and that of our families (service users) and delivery partners

<b>Non-Applicable Sections:</b>	POLICY IMPLICATIONS  LEGAL IMPLICATIONS  PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS
<b>Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)</b>	NONE