

**Decision Maker:** **PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND FAMILIES**

**Date:** For Pre-Decision Scrutiny by the Children, Education and Families PDS Committee on 11 June 2024

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

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

**Contact Officer:** Rachel Dunley, Head of Service Early Intervention and Family Support Services (CSC)  
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**Chief Officer:** Richard Baldwin, Director; Children Education and Families

**Ward:** All Wards

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1. Reason for report

1.1 This report provides an update on the work of Early Intervention and Family Support and the services provided to families.

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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 endorse the annual update.

## 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: Executive decision.
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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 Throughout this report rather than attach appendices we have used '[[CLICK HERE](#)]' to signify that there is additional information and/or examples available digitally to support the narrative.
- 3.2 Early Intervention and Family Support Services ('EIFS') sits within Children's Social Care [CLICK HERE](#). The umbrella of EIFS encompasses both statutory and non-statutory services, as well as being the lead for Bromley's Supporting Families (previously known as 'Tackling Troubled Families') work. Consequently, during the period of this report, EIFS comprised of the different services / programmes as listed below.
- Children and Family Centres
  - Bromley Children Project Family Support and Parenting Practitioner Team (FSPP Team)
  - Bromley's evidence based 'Parenting' offer
  - Children's Contact Centres
  - Information Advice and Support Service (IASS)
  - Reducing Parental Conflict Programme
  - Social Communications (ASC) Family Support Coordinator for the Borough.
- 3.3 This paper will provide a snapshot of examples of the work undertaken in the past 12 months (01 April 2023 to 31 March 2024), as it is impossible to report on all the work undertaken. All data reported will be for this timeframe unless otherwise stated in the report and referred to as 'this year'.
- 3.4 This year, with all remaining pandemic restrictions lifted, saw the return to a broader range of services commissioned through our annual procurement exercise based on feedback from families and professionals working with families. This year's procurement exercise was for services to be delivered in the coming year, 2024/5. It was robust and supported by a range of professionals drawn from Public Health, Early Years, Adult Education, Public Protection, Children's Services, and included professionals with a focus on SEND.
- 3.5 Lessons learnt from the pandemic continue to shape delivery with some online practice being sustained however, one of the key lessons was the need for in person contact and consequently we, alongside many partners, have returned to local delivery of services and support to residents. Uptake of services has increased.
- 3.6 It is also important to acknowledge that although this paper focuses on the work of the EIFS, general 'early help' services across the Borough include a large number of other teams and partners that sit outside EIFS. The contribution to early help support from organisations such as our schools, universal health providers, Bromley Y, and our Youth Services play an important role in ensuring that all our young people are able to access a full range of services. EIFS works closely with these other services and partners to offer a seamless service through the promotion of the 'Team Around the Family' model. The Team Around the Family ('TAF') model enables services to work together, prevents duplication and confusion for families and professionals alike, provides clarity through joint goals and shared minutes. Where children and young people need to move between services, TAF supports this with the Lead Professional role passing on to the most appropriate professional at that time with the family's agreement.
- 3.7 **Children and Family Centres**
- 3.7.1 Post pandemic all partners were invited to resume delivery in person to families where they live through the Children and Family Centres. Most partners have taken this offer up to varying degrees from dipping their toes in, to offering their full service. We continue to actively work with all partners to support them to bring their services to the families, some new partners, some old partners and including those who have only dipped their toes in to date.

- 3.7.2 Health Appointments have remained as appointment only however, we have increased the number of hours clinics are available across the six Children & Family Centres by a further 27.5 hours per week to support Health Colleagues to see more families.
- 3.7.3 We have refurbished rooms in two Children & Family Centres this year to make them suitable for Midwifery to deliver clinics from and towards the end of this year the Midwife clinics have started to return to the Centres.
- 3.7.4 Our in-house Learn and Play sessions have run throughout the year, led by our early years qualified staff. We are seeing increasing numbers of participants, and during this reporting period 17,621 session places were filled, this is an increase of 18% compared to last year. Feedback has been very positive.
- 3.7.5 We have continued to be an issuer for Healthy Start Vitamins, despite this now being rolled out to supermarkets and available directly on-line to families. During this year have issued 144 which is an increase of 97% over last year.
- 3.7.6 Our 'Swap-Shop' offer has proved to be important to local families and following the lifting of restrictions, donations are now being accepted. Local businesses continue to send donations of new items and pre-loved cleaned items e.g., a Bromley based dry cleaners donated uncollected clothes, and a children's boutique regularly donates school uniforms and other children's clothes. In addition, this year we have partnered with the charity section of the 'Children Salon' and have received 10 large boxes of unused children's clothing and shoes which have distributed to all the Children and Family Centres for families in most need. There have been in excess of 2,500 requests for support via the Swap-Shop this year, which is a massive increase of 2074% over last year. Whilst we do not empirically know, it is probably linked to the cost-of-living crisis.
- 3.7.7 This year saw a new partnership with 'ABC Book Club', a local charity, who have donated a large number of children's books. These have been given to families and children using the centres or working with our Family Support and Parenting Practitioner team to encourage children and parents to read as part of our focus on literacy support.
- 3.7.8 We retained our Foodbank Voucher status and continue to support the Foodbanks however during the pandemic many other teams in Bromley and other partner agencies started to undertake this role too. Last year we saw a dramatic reduction in the number of families approaching the Children and Family Centres for Foodbank support, however this year there has been a small increase up from 61 to 72, an increase of 18%. Again, this might be linked to the cost-of-living crisis.
- 3.7.9 During the year we continued to work with national grant schemes such as the Household Support Fund ('HSF') and have issued 150 supermarket vouchers to families as one-off support, linked to the cost-of-living crisis.
- 3.7.10 We have also worked with other local grant schemes such as Holiday And Food Fund ('HAF') as well as local charities, e.g., Bromley Brighter Beginnings, Bromley Children and Families Voluntary Sector Forum, FoodBank, Salvation Army, Citigate Church, Elmers End Free Church URC, to help distribute food hampers, gifts for children and families, school uniforms, books. During the Christmas period we supported 115 families through donations from our partner services, with hampers, gifts, books, and other items. An increase of 28% which might be linked to the cost-of-living crisis. Families were hugely grateful for the gifts and the generosity of Bromley's residents and businesses.

- 3.7.11 Our work with the Gypsy Romany and Traveller (GRT) community has continued, with the focus on developing a strong understanding of the individual and collective needs of our local GRT communities and how we can use our local knowledge creatively to develop services to meet identified needs.
- 3.7.12 One consistent challenge is that the GRT community do not choose to identify as GRT when reporting to authority. We are working with the community to change this. We are building data reporting to capture GRT statistics using addresses, but this will not capture those families living beyond own known sites. This year we saw 164 attendances by families who identified as part of this community at Children and Family Centres for activities such as Cooking with Children, Learn & Play sessions, Christmas parties, and in addition, four families reached out seeking support from our Family Support and Parenting Practitioner team.
- 3.7.13 Our dedicated GRT Outreach Team comprised of Children and Family Centre Support Officers and Family Support and Parenting Practitioners undertake monthly site visits to the Star Lane site and the Old Maidstone Road site, and these continued throughout the year come rain or shine. We realised our ambition to extend this to include the sites in the west of the borough and are now regularly visiting these communities too both Bromley run and private sites too.
- 3.7.14 The team's persistence and reliability has seen growth and change with the families in these sites. We encourage a love of reading in the younger children using the BookStart initiative we give the children books and will read to them when the weather allows, always giving something to foster the love of reading on each visit. The team will read letters and complete forms for them, we can see the families are acting on the advice they are given. The relationships are trusting and success stories have led to children accessing, staying, or getting back into education. If they can help in any way they will, children with high levels of anxiety are looking out for the team to play football an acknowledgement of the trust they have built with these communities. Some of these families now access other aspects of the EIFS service.
- 3.7.15 Outcomes for the families have been amazing through this Outreach Project.
- Children have accessed counselling services
  - Families have engaged with education, with examples of children who have returned to education, stayed in education, accessed tuition services, and some who moved into further education.
  - Families have been supported around finances.
  - Families have been supported to move off sites into bricks and mortar accommodation.
  - A family were helped to foster a child from their extended family.
  - One young person (female) has completed work experience through our service.
  - Families have accessed up to date advice around utilities and health services.
  - Families are now accessing a wide range of activities and courses available through EIFS and the Children and Family Centres
  - Families have been supported on a one-to-one basis around a range of issues.
  - We have liaised with housing services on their behalf around housing applications and site maintenance.
- 3.7.16 We believe this consistent and proactive approach to engage families from this community has resulted in more of the families choosing to declare their Gypsy, Romany, and Traveller heritage, and more importantly, seeking support when needed in relation to parenting, behaviour strategies, school placements, SEND support, and other life issues.
- 3.7.17 Feedback received from a family in this community for the support received was:

*“She [Family Support and Parenting Practitioner] was more than helpful, she is like a person you can lean on. Me and my kids are from the traveling community and we don’t normally let people in. She is just so good, kind, and helpful. I am so thankful she is supporting us.”*

- 3.7.18 Our Children and Family Centre staff and Family Support and Parenting Practitioners have been regularly visiting the TLK hostel in St Marys Cray since June 2023. This hostel houses Asylum seekers and Refugees who are waiting for decisions on their right to remain in the UK. These families have very little and we have been able to help out with books and activity packs for the children. Some of the families have young babies and we have been able to support with baby equipment, supplied some new school uniform clothing, and some items of warm clothing for the adults. In addition to this, we have provided family support using translation services as required.
- 3.7.19 The Children and Family Centres are recognised as the first port of call for families seeking support in relation to information, advice, and signposting for services focused on children with Autism / ASD and other social communication challenges. The Social Communication (inc Autism) Needs Targeted Services Coordinator (previously known as Autistic Spectrum Conditions ASC Coordinator) is embedded within EIFS. This role has been positively received by families and professionals (see 3.14 below).
- 3.7.20 Work with our colleagues in the SEN Advisory Team continues, and targeted play sessions for children with SEN including Social Communication difficulties continue to run from the Children and Family Centres. This year we have supported EYSAT/SEN Advisory teams to also run parent support meetings at all of the Children & Family Centres.
- 3.7.21 Our Social Media presence has grown from strength to strength. We have used our social media platforms to re-post information, advice and guidance from Public Health, specific support services such as Bromley and Croydon Women’s Aid for Domestic Abuse support and increased our video /play activity library. We have also used our social media platform to promote literacy and this year regularly posted books on ‘kindness’ for pre-schoolers which was very well received by families.
- 3.7.22 In addition to this, we used these platforms to promote and demonstrate the local authority’s commitment to all our residents e.g., Black History Month, Disability Awareness Week, International Women’s Day, Safety Awareness for under Fives, we posted daily in Facebook and Instagram information and advice, to support, educate, and inspire.
- 3.7.23 Data shows our growth to be substantial:
- we have in excess of 3,181 Facebook followers (this is up 492 (18% increase) in the last 12 months), and more than 24,900 page visits. [CLICK HERE](#)
  - we have in excess of 3,254 Instagram followers [CLICK HERE](#) (this is up by 1,079 (50% increase) in the last 12 months), and more than 13,700 profile visits.
  - we have published in excess of 1373 posts on Facebook and Instagram (over 456 in this reporting period).
  - our YouTube Channel [CLICK HERE](#) following has grown significantly - having 306 subscribers, and 41 videos, with 71,833 views (an increase of 69,487 views). The 3 most popular videos are:
    - Abilities in me – Speech Delay (in excess of 20,000 views)
    - Abilities in me – ADHD (in excess of 16,000 views)

- The Hungry Caterpillar (in excess of 11,000 views)

3.7.24 Developing the Children and Family Centres as accessible venues for families where they can access multiple services locally where they live is an important element of our service ethos. During this period, we have supported colleagues from a range of services both within the council and partner agencies to return to face-to-face service delivery in the community through Children and Family Centres. Some of those we have worked with are:

- Children's Social Care
  - Children Looked After Team; activities including NEET including holiday and out of hours sessions into the evening
  - Children with Disabilities Team – hosting the 'PACT' course termly
  - Safeguarding Teams; undertaking Parenting Capacity Assessments
  - Newly Qualified Social Workers Group; a safe space for weekly group Supervision sessions
  - Social workers and our own staff; a safe space for face-to-face meetings with families whilst enabling eyes-on the children
  - Special Guardianship & Foster Carer Groups
- Public Health
  - Our strong connection to Public Health has seen us supporting immunisation pop ups for children & adults and planned children's vaccination drives for COVID, MMR, Flu, BCG, and Polio,
  - We have supported drop-in information sessions for families on immunisations
  - We have developed targeted Learn and Play sessions to promote the importance of childhood immunisations and resourced play outfits, books, etc., (see 3.7.36 below)
  - We have hosted Blood Pressure monitoring week at all the Children and Family Centres during September and invited the community into have their blood pressure taken by purchasing equipment to support residents to take and report their own blood pressure throughout the year.
- Birth Registrations, who this year have expressed a desire to expand their offer out of the Children and Family Centres for the coming year.
- Mental Health Support
  - Oxleas Perinatal Mental Health Team delivering support to new mums, including a baby massage, weaning and maternal journal courses.
  - Thrive, Bromley's Therapeutic Service for Children Looked After delivering 1:1 support to Children.
  - Bromley Y counsellors delivering 1:1 counselling for young people
- Partners delivering activities for children with ASD
- EYSAT/SEN Advisory Teams – delivering support for parents and sessions with young children and their parents.
- Change Grow Live's Hidden Harm Worker; by appointment only – appointments with young people
- Bromley and Croydon Women's Aid – termly domestic abuse support sessions for women and young people

- Victims Support – hosting their 1:1 family sessions
- Metropolitan police – hosting their Community Impact Days
- Public Protection and Enforcement – hosting their whole service Learning Event
- Bromley Health Care specialist Speech & Language service – hosting their termly Talk Stars sessions and their summer holiday group.
- Short Breaks Scheme through Family Links via the Children’s Strategic Integrated Commissioner

3.7.25 Our Children and Family Centres are used by the Metropolitan Police for their Community Impact Days. To date they have used Castlecombe Children and Family Centre in Mottingham on a number of occasions and pulled together over 100 professionals. We are currently working with them to expand our support for their mini-impact days.

3.7.26 Further improvements to outside play spaces and our sensory rooms to improve the experience for children with SEN and allow children who do not have access to a safe outside at home develop their motor & imagination skills.

3.7.27 To ensure consistency and clarity, and so that residents can access sites that they recognise as Bromley’s Children and Family Centres and therefore deem to be safe, we have updated, refreshed, and simplified our signage to mirror our social media presence [\[CLICK HERE\]](#). This has had added benefits, with staff reporting pride for the spaces we create and maintain for families and has boosted staff morale. All feedback from families has been positive.

3.7.28 The Children and Family Centre took on the spaces previously used by the local authority’s nursery provision in Blenheim Children and Family Centre, and we have refurbished this into our ‘creche’ creating a set up suitable for children & babies of all abilities & needs. This freed up the space we had previously used as a creche. This space is now a new multi-purpose training room used for the delivery of courses and events for families, training for staff, and ‘Family Time’ contact.

3.7.29 Our Children and Family Centre Support Officers continue to offer targeted ‘Light Touch’ support for families who need help as a lower level of need. Their ‘Assessment’ tool is now embedded and is providing better identification of issues at an earlier point in time for the family and families’ feedback remains positive.

3.7.30 Some examples of the feedback from parents being supported via Light Touch caseloads held by the Children and Family Centre Support Officer (CFCSO) or just accessing the Children and Family Centres for activities:

*“I came to register my newborn baby name and vaccinations. I would like to share my experience and official support provided by Ms K [Children and Family Centre Support Worker]... Ms K was so kind and supportive in terms of helping the public very genuinely especially during critical circumstances to the needy people. I like to convey my heartfelt gratitude to Ms K for her excellent service”*

*“I just wanted to send in a little note to say thank you for all of the support that you provide to me and others as new Mums. I have attended the baby.me.fit (has been essential for helping with my well-being and getting back on track fitness and weight wise), infant feeding sessions (so grateful for the guidance that meant my baby could eat effectively and my three year old*



*had a wonderful chat about the importance of teeth cleaning with a dentist whilst there too - particularly handy at the time) and a few of the other classes, all of which have been so well organised and run. I also recently visited the sensory room which was fantastic and have signed my three year old up for the sports in March which I know she will love. We are always greeted by such wonderful reception staff too - thank you, G”*

*“I just wanted to thank you and the amazing team at [Children and Family Centre] for all their support during this time. Without you guys I’m not sure I would be here right now. Between classes, phone calls and meetings I have felt so supported and made some incredible friends. Thank you for everything you have done, M”*

- 3.7.31 Post pandemic data shows that shows families returning to the centres to access the services they need, in their communities in ever increasing numbers.
- 3.7.32 Registration data – this data shows new registrations only. Once you register, you are registered for life or until you ask us to remove your records. If someone has another child, that child needs to be registered but the existing registered family members do not. Therefore, each added registration is a unique person. Data shows in 2019/20 there were in excess of 9,650 new registrations across the six Children and Family Centres, but due to COVID this dropped to just 1,819 in 2020/21. Current data shows this has dramatically increased during 2023/24 to 10,238 new registrations, up from 8735 last year, an increase of 17%, and higher than our pre-COVID annual registration record.
- 3.7.33 Footfall data – this data shows visits to the Children and Family Centres. One person visiting 10 times is 10 visits = 10 footfall by 1 unique service user, whereas 10 people each visiting once is 10 visits = 10 footfalls but by 10 unique service users. Data shows in 2019/20 there were in excess of 98,000 visits across the six Children and Family Centres by over 24,500 service users. Due to COVID this dropped to just 6,668 visits by 3,355 unique service users in 2020/21. Data shows this has dramatically increased during 2023/4 to 67,301 visits up from 52,055 last year (an increase of 29%) by 21,690 unique service users up from 16,088 last year (an increase of 35%) . Whilst we are not yet at pre-COVID levels, we have seen families returning in vast numbers, which clearly shows that families appreciate the service, support, and range of activities on offer, and want to access services locally and in person. Verbal feedback from families often mentions the impact of loneliness on their mental health and the value they place on knowing that there is somewhere they can go to when they need to.
- 3.7.34 Our extensive Capital Works programme has now been completed bar a few snagging issues. This has supported the service to widen the offer of support for families and improve accessibility to our premises. The newly updated spaces are already being thoroughly used by families, and by partners to reach more of their service users. Existing service users with a range of additional needs, e.g., wheelchair using, sight and/or hearing impaired, and neurodiverse service users were involved in the process of testing accessibility, and appropriate Personal Emergency Evaluation Plans developed with them.
- 3.7.35 Over the past year, the service’s Early Years Creche Team has developed a range of new Learn and Play sessions, covering core elements of the Early Years Foundation Stage, and used these sessions to promote other important topics such as inclusion of different needs under the SEND umbrella within mainstream provision. In addition to this, the Learning Journeys for our children in the creches have move online and away from paper. This makes them easier to store, share and keep updated as the children are not with us as regularly and frequently as they would be in a nursery or pre-school setting. Feedback from parents is positive and often for these sessions posted in social media.

*“My baby boy and I love the Children and Family Centre! We feel very welcome and my boy enjoys every session there, especially Music and Movement with the amazing staff. I’m so glad I discovered the centre. The staff us always friendly and helpful, and the schedule is exciting... today we celebrated ‘Book Day’ and had dressing up and singing too. Can’t wait for the next session. Ax”*

- 3.7.36 Our Early Years Creche Team have also used the Learn and Play sessions to promote core messaging for the Local Authority, an example being the promotion of immunisations information and signposting through imaginative play (dressing up), storytelling “Drew’s Fab Jab”, and craft activities. This allows parents to become better informed, and children to explore and learn about how a ‘jab’ can help. This is a new project only started since January 2024, and we continue to develop this and monitor feedback from families. We are trying to find a way to evidence impact but currently do not have the data to evidence this.
- 3.7.37 We continue to seek new and innovative ways to obtain feedback from the families using our services in a sustainable and affordable way, that does not rely on longer term, high cost, externally hosted digital solutions. This year we have introduced a feedback token system [\[CLICK HERE\]](#) for anyone accessing an activity in the Children and Family Centres. This has proved to be a big hit with families and professional alike. A different question is posed each week, and the ‘voting’ recorded. Imagine a token voting system like you might find in a large supermarket... We have made this as accessible as possible due to the need for both adults and children to vote, and as a lot of our service users face other barriers such as learning needs, language, time, confidence; this model has been thoroughly embraced.
- 3.7.38 We have worked with many partners throughout the year, and wish to highlight the breadth of agencies, and note with thanks, their support and contribution to early help [\[CLICK HERE\]](#).

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

- 3.8.1 Family Support services have continued to support families just below the threshold for statutory interventions. This work is shaped by the Supporting Families agenda (nee Trouble Families). Practitioners are required to work with the entire family, to complete a holistic family assessment, to identify challenges and areas of need, working to a plan and goals, to ‘turn the family around’ in order to drawn down the ‘payment by results’ funding stream.
- 3.8.2 Data shows that this year we received 922 referrals for family support. This was a slight increase compared to last year’s 909 referrals. Our highest ever number of referrals for support for our Family Support and Parenting Practitioner Team was in 2019/20 at 977. This data shows a consistent referral rate of 900+ families per year, which includes families who have been referred into the service in the past for support as well as families new to the service. Repeat cycles of support are tracked and reported (see 3.8.8).
- 3.8.3 Data shows that the highest number of referrals into the service are families stepped down from Children’s Social Care. Normally we would expect Schools and Health to be close in number to the step-down rate but there has been a notable reduction in referrals from both schools and other partners which we are exploring. Last year the referral share was 41% stepped down from CSC, and 21% from Education partners, whereas this year the split is 65% step-downs from CSC, and only 14% from Education partners. Are there now new barriers preventing referrals being made, and if so, what are they and how can we remove these? This piece of exploratory work is underway as early intervention’s focus is about preventing escalation to statutory services, although there is a role for preventing repeat statutory intervention too.

- 3.8.4 We actively seek feedback from families both during and at multiple points after the support has ended. The families continue to be very open and share with us their feedback on the support they have received. This is some of the feedback received in the last 12 months from parents supported by Family Support and Parenting Practitioners:

*“Thank you, ZZ, [Family Support and Parenting Practitioner] so much for all your help and support you gave me so much more than you know. You was a genuine and kind person to talk to and not once did I ever feel judged and I was more honest and frank with you than I ever imagined I would be. You gave me access to help I didn't realise was out there for me during a time I needed it most. I can only imagine how stressful and hard your job can be and I hope that knowing you genuinely really make a difference to peoples lives helps make it a little easier for you. I wish you and your family all the best in life and your children should know that their mum is a superhero. Thank you again”*

*“I really like BCP and think that they do a really great job, it's a different perspective to [ANOther agency]'s support for children with Special Needs - everything you [EIFS] do is wonderful and respectful of families and parents. It's a different ethos - and BCP has got it right - seeing people/children as individuals and working 'together' for the best results – YY [Family Support and Parenting Practitioner] has been marvellous and really supportive.”*

*“I was given XX [Family Support and Parenting Practitioner] after reaching out for help for myself a while back, and never in all my life, have i felt the need to really go out my way to gain your email, to express how thankful i am to XX. i cant express enough how amazing XX has been to me, she has fully changed my aspect and view on life in so many ways, don't get me wrong i have to heal still an help myself an i have along way to go but XX really has made me see life goes on in a positive way, and that i can do things, ... XX has also been there to listen to me, always replying to my msgs, asking if I'm okay, checking in on me, posting leaflets in my door at every opportunity, ..., she's attended meetings with me, sent housing emails, been a shoulder to cry on. I feel so sad that our time has come to an end but i remind myself she's not my friend she's just been an amazing human being that has given her experience and knowledge to me as a full professional, I've expressed to XX im upset i wont have her on the phone often as its come to an end and she has gone above and beyond to reassure me the Children and Family Centre is always there to help. I'm gona miss her. She is a massive credit to your team anyone who has XX in their life is lucky.”*

- 3.8.5 The work of the Family Support and Parenting Practitioner Team is the core work used for the Supporting Families Grant (previously known as Tackling Troubled Families Grant). The measures are pre-determined by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, and the grant is 'payment by results'. Outcomes are measured over a period of time to evidence sustained change, making this a robust and challenging grant to achieve. Internal Audit are required to verify all claims to ensure that the outcomes claimed for are appropriate and evidenced.
- 3.8.6 Throughout the entire Supporting Families Grant programme, Bromley has achieved all the targets set by Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, in respect of both 'attaching' families and 'turning families around'. This has continued, and we have achieved all targets for 2023/4. This has resulted in Bromley being able to draw down the full grant allocation for the year 2023/4.
- 3.8.7 Targets for Bromley have increased year-on-year rising from 271 last year to 438 this year, and further rising in the coming year to 542 families. If there has been a two-year gap in support, and a family represents under different criteria, it is possible to re-claim for successful turnaround. Bromley has had very few families that fit these criteria.

- 3.8.8 We track the number of families we support, and the number of times those families come back to us for more support. Our tracking runs from 01 April 2012 to the current day. This provides us with data over the past 12 years and demonstrates the effectiveness of the work we are doing with families. This data shows we have worked with in excess of 5,250 families and supported in excess of 7,304 cycles of support. Of these 7,304 cycles of support our impact has been very positive with over 91.5% of families receiving no more than 2 cycles - in fact, 73.2% (3,844) families have only received one cycle of support in the 12 years we have been tracking. Our ambition is for our Family Support and Parenting Practitioner team and the wider services offered through EIFS, to support parents and to help the parents and their children and wider families to build skills, self-efficacy, and resilience rather than dependency on services. [\[CLICK HERE\]](#)
- 3.8.9 In addition to this, our embedded Employment Advisors, who are loaned to us full time by the Department for Work and Pensions from the Job Centre Plus Team in Bromley have continued to work alongside the team and support the families with employment and skills opportunities as well as benefit checks to ensure that the local authority is not having to provide for where there is existing funding available via central Government.
- 3.8.10 Measuring what might have happened but has not happened due to the support we provide is a challenge. This is a challenge faced by early help services across the UK and beyond. As a service we continue to look for measures that can help narrate the story, both the challenges and successes. We use the cycles of support (see above) as one measure, but this is not the whole story. Repeat cycles of support should not be seen as a negative. It is important to remember that seeking support from universal and targeted services, such as EIFS, is a positive and cheaper outcome compared to not seeking support and requiring longer term and more costly statutory interventions.
- 3.8.11 In light of the challenge of measuring what has not happened, we have looked for other tools to help us focus our approach and to identify distance travelled. One of the areas we are exploring is Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) [\[CLICK HERE\]](#). We are running a project, looking at the presence of ACEs in families' lives balanced against their access to, and use of, resilience factors. With ACEs we explore historic experience of the parent and current lived experience of the child. For resilience factors we note those currently in place and record those gained through our support. Research shows that those with higher number of ACEs are more likely to have mental health and physical health challenges, and need further cycles of support but where there are resilience factors in place, this can reduce the impact of trauma and increase the likelihood of our support resulting in significant and sustained change.
- 3.8.12 The Service has embedded ACEs into practice, developed Champions to promote the use of ACEs and continue the data analysis over time.
- 3.8.13 The Service was invited to present our work on ACEs at a national Children and Young People Now Evaluation Conference this year. Feedback was very positive. This work continues, and CYP Now have invited us back to update when our project finishes.

### 3.9 Parenting Offer

- 3.9.1 One of the key developments during COVID was the introduction of our Parenting Hotline. This service remains operational, Monday to Friday 9am to 4.30pm, with answerphone for calls outside this window. The service is used by parents and we have taken the decision to keep this option for parents to access ad-hoc advice and support as it has proved to be a better use of staff time than hosting a weekly 'drop-in' at each Children and Family Centre, and it extends the service for our residents from a weekly drop-in to a daily accessible helpline.

- 3.9.2 This year we revised our standalone parenting seminars [\[CLICK HERE\]](#), in line with new research. We have consolidated the offer and reduced the range from 18 to 8 different online parenting and standalone seminars. We now have 3 in our Neurodiversity focus series and a further 5 in our Let's Talk series. Previous topics have been amalgamated where appropriate to reduce costs of delivery, and to meet the needs of families in a more timely and less demanding fashion e.g., covering three related topics in one session.
- 3.9.3 We are demand led and run the courses request by parents in each locality in line with our needs-led approach.
- 3.9.4 We have expanded our short-courses [\[CLICK HERE\]](#), and now offer 3 'short-course' options. These require a little more commitment from a parent as they span 4 and 5 weeks, and cover our most popular parenting programmes; the New Forest Parenting Programme online ('NFPP') for parents of children with /likely to have ADHD, and New at Parenting online ('NAP') for new parents, and a new face-to-face programme, the Power of Parenting ('POP'), which has been developed to support parents on a Child in Need or Child Protection Plan for neglect and replaces 'Caring for your Child'. Feedback from parents on POP has been very positive with many choosing to attend additional parenting courses and bringing their friends along too.
- 3.9.5 With a revised model of parenting delivery and the merging of different courses, the data is no longer comparable to previous years in terms of courses run and attendance data, whether online or in person. What we can see however is a preference by parents to attend the various parenting courses in person, and not online. Parents tell us that this is because of the additional benefits of building supportive networks with parents who like themselves, are struggling and looking for support, often forming their own on-going support network.
- 3.9.6 This year under the new parenting offer we have delivered 49 online parenting seminars, 4 online NFPP short courses (3 of which were in the evening), 2 online NAP short courses and 1 POP course. There were 308 online seminar attendees.
- 3.9.7 This year in addition to the online seminars and online courses above, we ran a further 47 face-to-face parenting courses [\[CLICK HERE\]](#), out of the Children and Family Centres, including 2 on a Saturday, and covering 12 different courses. Courses vary in length from 4 weeks to 13 weeks. Data shows that the 47 face-to-face courses had 446 attendees and the 7 online courses had 104 attendees, totalling 550 parenting course attendees this year.
- 3.9.8 All our Family Support and Parenting Practitioner staff are trained in our core programmes and supported to achieve formal accreditation by the relevant overseeing / licensing bodies post training. This model ensures consistent messaging for families as the same methods, strategies and evidence base is used in 1-2-1 family support too. It also allows us to respond immediately to changing needs, new developments, and any practice changes.
- 3.9.9 All the courses we offer have been updated with links into ACEs and Reducing Parental Conflict, alongside current published research, and updates from the courses' licensing bodies.
- 3.9.10 This is some of the feedback received in the last 12 months from parents attending parenting courses with Bromley Children Project at the Children and Family Centres in response to the question 'this course has helped me to...':
- *Reflect on the all positive things I do already, and I've learnt so much more to help me parent*
  - *Recognise and find support – there is so much out there!*
  - *Why my kids need quality time with me, and planning it in*

- *Understanding about my kids own emotions and reactions*
- *It brought us together, we now communicate with each other, we are kinder, more positive and now work together at home doing our chores!*

### 3.10 Children's Contact Centres

- 3.10.1 Recruitment of staff during the past year has continued to be a challenge but we have been successful in the most part. The ambition remains to enhance the service provided to our children by extending the operating hours, improving the premises, and identifying quiet times where there is the opportunity to sell unused space and officer time to generate income to offset the cost of providing this statutory service. We have achieved a staff level that supports opening 7 days a week and families are choosing to have their family time at the weekends as predicted.
- 3.10.2 This year we delivered 2,233 contact sessions with 6,892 attendees. These will not be unique attendees because during proceedings the court often order regular and frequent contact 'Family Time' sometimes multiple occasions in one week, dependant on the circumstances. This is an increase on last year's attendees of 11%.
- 3.10.3 Working alongside colleagues in Children Looked After and Children Leaving Care, we have adopted changes in language moving from 'contact' to 'family time' in all our literature and reporting.
- 3.10.4 The service has moved forward with the development of a Flipbook resource [CLICK HERE](#) to support new staff who have less exposure to other team members and council colleagues due to their working days being at the weekend. This has received positive feedback from those staff. A similar booklet [CLICK HERE](#) has been developed for families to help them navigate the contact service.
- 3.10.5 The service has developed management reports to improve data quality due to the need to use agency staff in emergencies to prevent a 'family time' session being cancelled. An example is the report to capture incomplete observation reports. This has provided the team with a tool that can pick up gaps and ensure they are corrected in real time.
- 3.10.6 The service has revised and shared with colleagues across Children's Services a range of policies and procedures, designed for clarity and to support the smooth delivery of family time. An example is the policy for Terminating and/or re-arranging family time sessions.
- 3.10.7 In order to provide reassurance of quality, the service has created and is using new audit sheets, undertaking staff observations, and this coming year will introduce a revised Observation and Summary form as one of the audit findings.
- 3.10.8 To ensure that family time can be as effective and productive as possible the service has reviewed, and where necessary, restocked resources for families, taking into account feedback from families.
- 3.10.9 The service has faced challenges with our premises in Orpington at the Saxon Centre, and adapted quickly to delivering from our other venues, primarily Blenheim Children and Family Centre. This has reduced capacity to sell space and we have seen a reduction in income from £17,500 to £13,845 as a result.
- 3.10.10 Feedback from both families and professionals using the service has been positive.

*"I am an Independent Social Worker working across the country and as such routinely visit contact centres as part of my assessment work. I just wanted to take some time to express my views regarding the high standard of service being offered at the [Children's Contact Centres]. I have visited on three occasions in the last couple of weeks. I have been impressed with the resources available to the families – the centre is extremely clean and having self-contained spaces makes for a much more enjoyable experience. The welcome I have received from all of the staff at the [centre] has been greatly appreciated and I have observed the same friendly approach being offered to everyone using the centre. I am sure this is a big part of the relaxed atmosphere the centre has. I am aware that managing contact is not an easy job and I do not believe we give enough credit to the teams providing this extremely valuable service. The sessions I have been involved with have not been easy, albeit for different reasons but the level of professionalism has been evident (achieving the difficult balance between ensuring the child's safety whilst also respecting the parent). It is, in my experience, rare to come across a team and a venue that 'ticks all the boxes' but [Bromley's] Children's Contact Centres definitely do!"*

### **3.11 Information Advice and Support Service**

3.11.1 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. The Team has successfully recruited to vacancies and is now fully staffed.

3.11.2 Our data shows This year up from 314 to 747, increase of 138%.

3.11.3 Our team of Independent Volunteer Supporters (IVS) have continued to give up their time, energy, and expertise to support our families. The service and the families are extremely grateful to the IVS Team. Feedback from families has reflected the positive impact of their support.

*"I would like to say thank you so much to [IVS] for being there today, I felt supported knowing that she was present to give input on points I was unsure of, and that she was able to support me in expressing my views in a clear way. The meeting was a success because it was in [my child's] best interest and provisions that were previously suggested but wasn't done at the school, are now promised to be put in place for him. And thank you for arranging everything."*

*"I just wanted to extend my thanks to you [IVS] for all the support given to us both last week and today. I honestly couldn't have asked for anything more. Having an advocate with me today really helped my anxiety and allowed me to express how I felt without letting my emotions overwhelm me, I knew I had backup. Being able to speak things through afterwards and to discuss next steps has given me a clearer view on how we can help support [my child]. Please do accept my gratitude and my thanks."*

*"Thank you once again for all your help and support in making this happen. He would not be getting this experience if it was not for your help and support in this matter."*

3.11.4 The team have a public-facing website [www.bromleyiass.org.uk](http://www.bromleyiass.org.uk) [\[CLICK HERE\]](#) which has been live for 2 years and is recognised as a beacon of best practice by the Council for Disabled Children, and the National Information Advice and Support Services Network. Work continues to develop the website further, as our residents and professionals have told us how valuable and useful it has been.

3.11.5 Data reporting from the Website shows

- 48,977 pages viewed in 2023 versus 42,416 in 2022.
- 30,214 visits to website in 2023.

– access via

- 58% directly via web-site address
  - 27% by other including LBB and Ed Matters websites
  - 14% by search engine
  - 1% social networks
- top five pages in order of most frequently viewed
- Contact details for Information Advice and Support Service
  - Advice 10-16
  - Advice 16-25
  - Advice Early Years
  - Refusing to go to school

3.11.6 This year we have focused on recruitment. The staff team comprises of three staff and one manager, plus our IVS team. The year started with two vacancies both of which have been successfully recruited to. In addition, we have increased our IVS Team and completed their training. One of the two new IVS have started and another is in the pipeline. We have ambitions to recruit additional IVS into the team this coming year.

3.11.7 The Service has looked for ways to reach families other than the standard telephone and email route, introducing 'Coffee Mornings and Afternoons' running across all six Children and Family Centres each term. These have been piloted at different times, and based on parental feedback will continue to run but in the morning slots only as afternoons proved more difficult for families due to school collection times.

3.11.8 We have linked Information Advice and Support Service into the Social Communications (inc Autism) Needs Targeted Support Coordinator and have piloted joint 'coffee mornings' [CLICK HERE](#) which families reported worked extremely well for them.

3.11.9 We have developed a Flipbook for new and existing staff [CLICK HERE](#) to support with practice, add clarity about expectations and service delivery. This has proved a hit with our IVS team who found this very accessible. Based on the success of the Flipbook model, we are developing this for parents and another for Children and Young People as this places SEND information, advice and support in their pockets.

3.11.10 The Information Advice and Support Service will, from June 2024, report formally into the SEND Governance Board through the Head of Service for EIFS. These reports will detail more of the service's achievements, challenges, and data.

3.11.11 We receive a lot of feedback from parents and carers in writing and in person.

*"IASS has been instrumental in getting my daughter an EHCP, which in turn has enabled her to access school again after 2 years of Elective Home Education. I contacted IASS initially when I was having difficulties with the school, then again when my daughter started Elective Home Education. At each point the service provided me with the advice I needed. My daughter is now one of only 4 children placed in the XX Secondary Sch (Speech & Language unit). IASS has helped get her [daughter] back into school with the information provided, and without the EHCP in place things would look very different. I've told her you [Information Advice and Support Service officer] has been very important in her life."*

*"Thank you for your email, after speaking with you I arranged a meeting with the school Senco, I put all my worries and concerns on the table and I must say things have very much improved. And we are both working closely together, so thank you for your help it went a very long way. Thanks again"*



*“Once again I would like to thank you [Information Advice and Support Service officer] for your time the other day and for also sending me the information you did. I’m pleased to say that the meeting went well and I do feel like the whole process and policies have been clearly explained to me and my views were listened to and I did feel a lot better after it... . I do believe that myself and the school can now work and engage well to provide the best possible outcome. I am so very grateful for your advice and support and if any more issues arise..., I will most definitely be back in contact with your organisation. It was lovely talking with you and thank you for validating me and my worries...”*

### **3.12 Domestic Abuse - CODA**

- 3.12.1 Domestic Abuse remains prevalent in cases supported by EIFS and statutory Children’s Social Care, and interventions are needed to support children impacted by it. Consequently, in EIFS we continue to devote time and staffing to the delivery of ‘CODA’ Children Overcoming Domestic Abuse. This is a course of 10 child focused support sessions for children who have witnessed DA against their primary female carer. It is an evidence based licenced programme overseen by the charitable organisation ‘AVA’ (Against Violence and Abuse).
- 3.12.2 EIFS has been delivering the CODA programme for over 7 years. Schools work in partnership to enable the children to attend these sessions, whilst their mothers attend a parallel session.
- 3.12.3 Parents have told us that this programme is making a real difference to their lives and the lives of their children. Here are some examples of the type of feedback received from those attending the courses which ran during 2023/24 (children in these cohorts were aged 7-12). Feedback to the question ‘How has it (this course) made you feel differently from when you started?’

#### Parent after completing the course

- *My eldest is more open than previously and has started to comment on her dad in a more negative light rather than defending him all the time – it’s like she can see now that bad behaviour is bad.*
- *My youngest has become more vocal in telling me how her dad’s behaviour makes her angry and her views on her dad. She never said nothing until now. I did know she felt like that. She is now talking to me.*
- *Since attending the group my child’s behaviour has improved at home and in school.*
- *The boys have worked through a lot of their issues and we are able to articulate their experience and feelings really well. It has also improved the dynamic between the boys.*

#### Children after completing the course

*Tell us what you have enjoyed about the programme?*

- *Everything! It was helpful.*
- *It was good to talk to someone I didn’t know about everything*
- *I enjoyed the problem solving session.*

### **3.13 Reducing Parental Conflict Programme**

- 3.13.1 We continued to be grant funded by the Department for Work and Pensions to deliver against the Reducing Parental Conflict ‘RPC’ programme. Our goal is to intervene earlier, to help people identify that their relationship is not healthy, that the conflict they expose one another to, could develop into domestic abuse, can harm their own mental wellbeing, and impact the long-term wellbeing of their children. The end of the road does not have to be a domestic abuse relationship, and conversely, domestic abuse happens without going through a ‘safe enough’ parental conflict stage.

- 3.13.2 This was the third year of funding. In previous years we developed an awareness training for professionals to better understand the sign and symptoms, enlisted 'champions', developed a Forum for discussion and learning, developed and produced a toolkit and strategies for those who work with families to help the families alter their pathway which is given to colleagues and partners who complete the Awareness Raising Training, and have housed this within a dedicated websites both within London Borough of Bromley's website [\[CLICK HERE\]](#) and separately in the Bromley Parenting Hub website [\[CLICK HERE\]](#).
- 3.13.3 This year we have continued to deliver the RPC Awareness Training. We have now trained in excess of 350 professionals from within the local authority and across our partners and others working with Bromley's families.
- 3.13.4 Feedback from professionals attending the RPC awareness training was positive. Here is a selection of the feedback and the agency it came from:
- *"It gave me a great broad understanding of how to help both parents and children affected by parental conflict". Social worker*
  - *"It helped me to understand how to start the conversation about parental conflict and how to use the tools". Safeguarding Lead, primary school*
  - *"I'm more confident in how to approach parents and spot signs of PC". Family Support Worker*
  - *"It is going to help me support families and share the impact on children". Wellbeing practitioner*
  - *"Clear information and I can use it to signpost parents". Social Prescribing Link Worker*
  - *"Training was very engaging and full of useful resources ". Housing Officer*
  - *"So many engaging activities, useful information, and very powerful videos that I can use with families". SEND worker*
  - *"Clear structure and very practical information, I have a better understanding on the differences between DA and PC". Refugee caseworker*
  - *"So many amazing resources that there are out there and so easy to access" School teacher.*
- 3.13.5 During this year we have added to our offer by designing and developing a short 3-week course to deliver the Reducing Parental Conflict message in an accessible format directly to parents through the Children and Family Centres existing parenting support offer. The pilot was a success and the programme is now part of our core parenting offer.
- 3.13.6 Parents attending this training told us:
- What did you like most about the RPC workshops:*
- *Perspectives of the course advisors/teachers*
  - *Inclusive, understanding, others input, reflection, sharing ideas, group was not too big*
  - *The teachers*
  - *Activities and videos*
- Most important thing or strategy you learnt at the RPC workshops:*
- *'I' statements*
  - *How even low-level conflicts affect negatively on my child*
  - *The impact on the children. Everyone needs to know this.*
- After attending the RPC workshops is there anything you plan to do differently:*
- *Listen more to my husband and children. Use the 'I' statements*
  - *Stop and think before I react in a conflicting situation.*
  - *Stop, think, stay positive*
- What is the most important thing you have learnt at the 3 RPC workshops:*

- *How much our conflict impacted on our kids.*
- *I now know my children are aware and upset and I could have stopped that. I wish I'd known this before.*
- *How to reflect and keep everyone in safe environment*

- 3.13.7 We have expanded the available literature for families and professionals by creating a 'Reducing Parental Conflict Information for Families' booklet [\[CLICK HERE\]](#), a 'RPC Information for Professionals' booklet [\[CLICK HERE\]](#). We have distributed 805 of these to date; 265 of the booklet for professionals and 540 of the booklet for families.
- 3.13.8 We have developed a 'reading list' [\[CLICK HERE\]](#) of relevant children's books themed to help children to cope with worries, anxiety and anger, and another for separation and divorce. We produced an advice sheet for parents with a brief summary of the books, their messaging, and links to free audible internet versions too.
- 3.13.9 We have also focused on supporting both families and professionals to understand the difference between parental conflict and domestic abuse. We have created a 'Distinguishing harmful Parental Conflict and Domestic Abuse screening tool' [\[CLICK HERE\]](#) which has been distributed and promoted by our RPC Champions.
- 3.13.10 We have focused on early intervention and key trigger points in the lives of families with the aim to support families, prevent escalation and sustain healthy families. One of the most stressful times is the arrival of a baby when family dynamics change. We have developed a 'How to prepare your relationship for BABY' leaflet [\[CLICK HERE\]](#), printed 4,500 and these are now being distributed with birth registration packs by Bromley's Birth Registrars.
- 3.13.11 We have partnered with two external providers to bring online courses for parents to Bromley: The Race Equality Foundation for all relationships and Spurgeon's for Separated Parents. Both are available for free via the Bromley Parenting Hub website [\[CLICK HERE\]](#)
- 3.13.12 We have also partnered with Coram to deliver therapeutic sessions for the whole family on reducing parental conflict, called "Family Harmony". The first cohort has started with five families and is on-going. We also have plans for a further 3 cohorts which will involve another 15 families.
- 3.13.13 We developed, designed, and delivered 'train the trainer' training for all Family Support & Parenting Practitioners and Team Managers (over 30 staff) across the EIFS service so that the 3-week course for parents could be added to the core parenting offer and sustained beyond the life of the grant funding.
- 3.13.14 We have continued to update and refresh our website [www.bromleyparentinghub.info](http://www.bromleyparentinghub.info) which is free to access for families and professionals, sharing the tools and strategies, and encouraging families to look at their own lives and challenge themselves to change – with support.
- 3.14 **Social Communications (inc. Autism) Needs Targeted Support Coordinator for the Borough**
- 3.14.1 The Social Communications (inc Autism) Needs targeted Support Coordinator role was developed as part of Bromley's All Age Autism strategy and also reflects the growth in requests for support from families with a child who has social communication challenges. The post funded through the SEND Department in Education but hosted with EIFS and located in the Children and Family Centres. The role supports not only families, but professionals too

through the provision of advice, guidance, and challenge, as well as being the gateways to specialist support from MENCAP. We have worked collaboratively to ensure the Children and Family Centres are centres of excellence for Autism and Social Communication.

- 3.14.2 The service has updated the information for families on the London Borough of Bromley website to ensure that appropriate information is easy to find [\[CLICK HERE\]](#). This page now provides a link to the Enquiry Form [\[CLICK HERE\]](#) as well as a helpful Flipbook for families to navigate the support offer in Bromley [\[CLICK HERE\]](#) .
- 3.14.3 During 2023/24, demand has exceeded expectations with the number of families who have reached out to this service. This was challenging as we ran with the post vacant for six months, but one of the EIFS Team Managers picked this work up and successfully supported in excess of 540 enquiries, up from 300 last year (an increase of 80%).
- 3.14.4 We have provided access for parents via on-line coffee morning which have recently transitioned to in person at the Children and Family Centres. The response has been good, and feedback supports this.
- 3.14.5 The service introduced new processes to streamline and improve data quality for 2024-25. The purpose of the role has been to support the 'graduated' approach and encourage families to access support from universal and targeted services, [\[CLICK HERE\]](#) and only refer onto specialist support those families who really need that level of support. Of the 540 interactions, only 43 resulted in Mencap referrals, which is an 8% conversion rate and better than forecast. This has enabled Bromley's specialist provider, MENCAP, to work with the families that need their expertise, and prevent them becoming overwhelmed by referrals. It has also built families self-efficacy and promoted the excellent work undertaken in universal and targeted services.
- 3.14.6 We have now successfully recruited to the post and the new staff member is in post and completing their training.
- 3.14.7 The EIFS Service has updated the information on the LBB website, and created links to other services which are pertinent to families seeking information and support for their children with either traits of, or a diagnosis of, a social communication need.
- 3.14.8 This year on 28 June 2024, we held a SEND event focused on Social Communication (inc. Autism) Needs and called this a "ONE STOP COFFEE SHOP (SCN&ASC)" at Blenheim Children and Family centre. The event brought together 15 different services that successfully reached out to over 60 families [\[CLICK HERE\]](#) . The collaborative working on the day gave the unique opportunity for these families to meet the services face to face. Families reported that this event saved them 2 weeks' worth of phone calls trying to speak to services by phone. Services reported being able to see families face-to-face and the opportunity to network was hugely valuable. Families were able to meet services previously not known to them and to access support.
- 3.14.9 As part of this event, and to coincide with our wider social media campaign to celebrate all things SEND, we worked with families to create a video which was played with permission during this event and at the 'SENDSATIONAL' Event in October. The video contained work by children and young people with various differences and special educational needs. We did not have permission to share across wider social media. This has since been edited and the element without consent to share widely on social media has been removed [\[CLICK HERE\]](#) .
- 3.14.10 The timing of the One Shop Coffee Morning event was planned to coincide with the approaching summer break when children are transitioning onto their next part of the

educational journey. This will be repeated in 2024/5, but we will invite additional services suggested by families. Some of the services that attended included Bromley Y, CASPA, Bromley Mencap, Children Disability Team, Early Years team, Information Advice and Support Service, Rebecca Osborne Bromley SEND Health Visiting lead, Local Offer, Zap Kids Club, Living Word Christian Fellowship International, Bromley Children Project, Bromley SEND team, Bromley parent carers forum, ISAT.

3.14.11 The EIFS Service has used the workflow this year to help shape and streamline processes, to enhance our communication and publicity, and created a pathway document [\[CLICK HERE\]](#) which visually explains the 'graduated approach' to support. To improve accessibility, we have created an online enquiry form, repeated coffee mornings. The Team Manager leading on this work has also developed, for the coming year, bespoke accessible SEND focused and appropriate Learn and Play sessions in the six Children and Family Centres

3.14.12 Some of the feedback received this year

- "I've found XX [Social Communication inc. Autism Needs Targeted Support Coordinator] really helpful. She was brilliant when I spoke with her, simply the best! She helped us massively through our struggles, we now see a light at the end of the tunnel after years of struggle"
- "Hi XX [Social Communication inc. Autism Needs Targeted Support Coordinator] I just wanted to say how great it was talking to you and the comprehensive email you've written really means a lot, and shows how much you care, thanks! AA [daughter] did incredibly well and has adjusted well on the weekend too (which was something I was worried about, that she would think she was going to school). Thanks for all the amazing info, I will work my way through it. Just to mention one point, was that school have confirmed there's an inhouse SLT that comes weekly to offer students whatever is in their EHCP 😊. It will be lovely to stay in touch and be able to reach out if there's anything else. Thanks again and you've been so helpful"

### 3.15 General developments

3.15.1 EIFS sits within Children's Services and was part of the recent OFSTED Inspection of Bromley Local Authority Children's Service (ILACs) in November of this year. The report findings were exceptional with Bromley being judged as Outstanding in all categories. Ofsted said of EIFS, *"Impressive family help services intervene at the right time to improve children's circumstances. Experienced and skilful early help practitioners confidently assess need and empower families to improve their relationships and lives. Excellent early help services are carefully targeted to help families with a wide range of needs. Parental consent and the thresholds for intervention are well understood by practitioners and partners. Help is offered at the least intrusive level."*

3.15.2 Since 2016, EIFS has been approached by other local authorities for support and guidance on their improvement journeys and is currently working with London Borough of Lambeth's Early Help services.

3.15.3 EIFS takes the responsibility of early intervention and prevention seriously and to this end take time, energy, and resources to produce a range of 'newsletters' which we regularly publish to help promote best, and new emerging, practice and guidance on a range of topics. These are shared with families and with other professionals to share on with families they are supporting. Examples are our Safety Newsletter [\[CLICK HERE\]](#) which covers accident prevention and core

Public Health messages, our Reducing Parental Conflict Newsletter [\[CLICK HERE\]](#) sharing snippets of our offer and focusing on strategies to help, our CODA Newsletter [\[CLICK HERE\]](#) promoting the course content and families experiences of the course to encourage attendance. There are others.

- 3.15.4 Partnership working remains a core value for the Service and a good example of this during the year has been our work with Change Grow Live (CGL), who are commissioned by Public Health as the borough's Drugs and Alcohol intervention. We are joint working in every sense, offering co location in our offices as well as dedicating one of our Team Managers as a SPOC who bases themselves in CGL's offices every month , and a tangible outcome this year has been the creation of an online co-hosted and co-delivered 'What's drugs got to do with it' seminar for parents and professionals. This will be piloted in the coming year.
- 3.15.5 The Service has also reviewed how we reach out to the public who do not yet know of the wide range of services we offer. We have enhanced our social media profile as described above, linked to other partners' social media channels [\[CLICK HERE\]](#), and attended many places in person to promote services including churches, shops, cafes, as well as organised events with partners. To enhance our visual presence, we have developed a range of easy to transport pull-up promotional banners [\[CLICK HERE\]](#). These are being used every day in the Children and Family Centres [\[CLICK HERE\]](#) and whenever we are invited to attend an event.
- 3.15.6 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, some have stepped out for a period to have babies or to be seconded to support other teams, and several have retired after long service with Bromley. We have welcomed a number of new staff into the Team during the past year who have already become valuable team members.
- 3.15.7 Recognising the need to keep our staff, the face of Bromley, relevant and supported, we have continued with our Whole Service Training days. Over 100 of the team successfully participated both Training Days in April and October 2023. We ran multiple sessions which included self-care for staff as well as practice workshops by working with partners across the council and other key partner agencies who supported this by delivering sessions in addition to our in-house led sessions; some examples being PREVENT Counter Terrorism, Lemn Sissay's TED Talk on "A Child of the State" and Team Building. A newsletter [\[CLICK HERE\]](#) outlining the day and feedback has been circulated.
- 3.15.8 Other training events have been held outside of the Whole Service Training Days, covering Positive People Skills, and Systemic Practice. Our Positive People Skills training mirrored the Positive Parenting Skills course we deliver to parents. This is because Positive Parenting Skills is an evidence based good course that explains what parents need to have in place as a foundation for good parenting. The course is also based on good life skills that can be applied to all aspects of everyday life – including work. The service is here to support vulnerable children and parents in Bromley, and this foundation to parenting is good for all across the wider EIFS service, so they can apply the learning to their practice, no matter what their role. To date 60+ of the team have been trained and more is planned to encompass all our staff.
- 3.15.9 We have continued to deliver general awareness raising information sessions to support colleagues and partners to understand the EIFS offer of support for families in the shape of our EIFS Info Sessions, and sessions targeting Social Care, Education, Health and Pre-school/Nursery settings. The ambition is to ensure all families who need support know where to access this, and those professionals working with them are signposted on the offer too and can signpost when families are unaware. The aim being to get the right support to the family at the earliest opportunity, local to where they live, in order to promote any necessary change in their

lives to improve the children's and parents' lived experience and outcomes. These sessions are monthly on-line and bookable via Eventbrite.

- 3.15.10 In addition to the EIFS Info sessions, we have delivered bespoke awareness raising training to partners. Some examples from this year being, Bromley Y, Change Grow Live, ICB Social Prescribers, Children and Families Hub, Referral and Assessment, CSC Quality Improvement's Reviewing Officers, Public Protection and Enforcement Dept.
- 3.15.11 EIFS places a high priority on supporting work placements. Since 2015 the service has supported in the following ways:-
- Working with the Education Business Partnership, the service hosts on average 12 to 15 school students work-placements each year for 1-2 weeks.
  - Working with Mencap and Bromley College, the service has hosted a supported intern for an academic year hosted exclusively at our central offices at Bromley Central Library. Currently there are two supported interns at the library who have been with the service since September 2023. However, in the last two months we have extended this opportunity to two additional supported interns based at Blenheim CFC. Also at Blenheim, we are also working with the supported Horticultural team to design and carry out the work to significantly improve the creche garden.
  - Our work with Mencap and Bromley College have plans to continue to expand further.
- 3.15.12 Feedback from Sally Bateman, the Supported Internships Manager at MENCAP is positive: *"Bromley Mencap have been working with BCP for 2 academic years. During this time, we have seen students flourish in their placements, not only learning key skills in the workplace but life skills essential to their development as young adults. We have been working on both sites and BCP have given opportunities that would not be possible in other organisations for students with complex needs. In addition to their hospitality, we are now delivering a horticulture project, which will transform one of their outdoor spaces into a usable area for the creche. An amazing partnership formed and hopefully continued, I cannot thank you enough for your support and commitment to the needs of our students."*
- 3.15.13 Added to this, feedback from one of the young people who is on a long-term placement and currently in his second year with us, collected by his 'Supporter',... *'H' has really benefited from his time working with the Bromley Children Project. He enjoys the various tasks that he has been assigned, which involve tasks such as paper shredding, collating documents into folders, laminating and putting documents into envelopes. He is made to feel welcome by members of staff at the Project and his Mencap job coach ensures that he understands everything that is required of him. It is good for 'H' to work within a supported environment but also with an understanding of how to fit in within a team and follow office practices. He enjoys his time there and we are grateful that he has had this opportunity.*
- 3.15.14 Our promotion work using Flipbooks has been so well received by parents and professionals that we have enhance this further and added to our range of Flipbooks.
- 3.15.15 We have also worked closely with Bromley's Education Safeguarding Officer and co-delivered both safeguarding and EIFS awareness sessions to Schools, both bespoke individual school basis and to groups e.g., the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) Forum.
- 3.15.16 As we approach yet more challenging financial times, the value of intervening as early as possible, before the issues evolve in serious challenges and difficult problems, and the cost of resolving escalates, the EIFS service has continued to ensure a presence in a broad range of meetings. Some of these are because of the number of buildings the service is responsible for and other in relation to how we can offer support to families before crisis hits, and once in

crisis. Meeting attendances including the Youth Justice Service's Out of Court Disposal Panel, the Missing Education and Gang Affiliation Panel, Missing and at Risk of Child Exploitation Panel, SEND Governance Board, CSC Section18, CSC Resources Panel, Counter Terrorism Channel Panel, Domestic Abuse Strategic Board, Corporate Equality Diversity and Inclusion Board, Corporate Health and Safety Board, Departmental Health and Safety Group (Chair), Health and Wellbeing Board, Corporate Lone Working Group, Under Five's Holistic Support Panel, 0-19 (Health) Steering Group, Supporting Families Regional Meeting (Chair), London Early Help Network mtg, DLUHC Data Managers' (Chair), Regional IASS Network meeting, Engagement SEND, Bromley Gypsy Romany Traveller Working Party, South East London Inter-agency Gypsy Romany Traveller Meeting, London Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment Grp.

- 3.15.17 This has demonstrated the importance of, and cross cutting nature of early help in the broadest sense, and the Service is supporting the development of an Early Help Strategic Board, to be the governance pathway for multi-agency multi-disciplinary partner approach to delivering the Early Help Strategy (November 2022 PDS Schedule (CEF 22066)), reporting into the Bromley Safeguarding Children's Partnership. The ambition is to hold the inaugural meeting this coming year, before the schools break for Summer 2024.
- 3.15.18 The Single Point of Contact 'SPOC' model developed during COVID for our colleagues in Children's Social Care, schools across Bromley's educational landscape, and partner agencies such as Change Grow Live, Bromley and Croydon Women's Aid, continues to offer support to colleagues in the moment. This model continues to promote communication, bespoke training, improved referrals, and better case management.
- 3.15.19 To support those staff within our Service who line manage staff themselves, we have developed a Managers' Flipbook [\[CLICK HERE\]](#) which is near to completion, to help navigate the numerous H.R. processes and procedures.
- 3.15.20 Working in partnership with Bromley HealthCare and the Early Years SEN Advisory Support Service we have develop the Under 5's Holistic Support Panel. This is in its infancy but has already identified families earlier than would have happened, who are now receiving support from the most appropriate partner(s).
- 3.15.21 The Service has been working with the Birth Registrations Service for several years now and this year has redesigned the Certificate Folder [\[CLICK HERE\]](#) that is given to all new parents registering the birth of their child. The folder now promotes services and support for families.
- 3.15.22 The Service has been working closely with the Operational Property Review team supporting discussions, site visits, and planning for the implementation of the works programme across our 8 sites.
- 3.15.23 The importance of reviewing the quality of the work that we do cannot be underestimated. We have managed to develop in house an Assurance of Quality and Improvement Team 'AQAI'. This is a part time post filled by two staff on flexible retirement plans. Despite the small resource, the output has been considerable. The audits have cover practice and core themes, and there has been practice improvement, paperwork has been updated, processes revised and streamlined saving staff time and improving record keeping. A newsletter is published to share learning across the whole of EIFS services [\[CLICK HERE\]](#). With such a variety of services within EIFS, this approach has enabled improvements to be cross cutting and reinforced the importance of data quality for staff.

### 3.16 Update on our ambitions for 2023/4



- 3.16.1 Last year we set challenges for the Service to focus on. Were we have progressed these, an update is provided below.
- 3.16.2 Children and Family Centres
- (a) We have introduced the online registration service.
  - (b) We have expanded our outreach to the Gypsy Romany and Traveller Communities in Bromley to encompass the sites across the south and west of the borough.
- 3.16.3 Family Support and Parenting Practitioner
- (a) We have developed the Service's use of and reporting of ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences) and resilience factors. We have developed and streamlined our database recording and embedded ACEs as an additional measurement tool that supports evidence of sustained change to validate the Supporting Families grant draw-down.
  - (b) We have drawn down the full Supporting Families grant for this year.
- 3.16.4 Parenting offer
- (a) We have developed the Reducing Parental Conflict courses for parents and these have run and received excellent feedback.
  - (b) We have reviewed all the existing programmes, refreshing the content to reflect the latest research and any new findings as approved by the licensors of each individual programme
- 3.16.5 Children's Contact Centres
- (a) Our focus this year was to achieve our National Association of Child Contact Centres 'NACCC' Accreditation. Due to staffing challenges and premises issues this was not possible.
- 3.16.6 Information Advice and Support Service
- (a) We have reviewed and updated the Information Advice and Support Service Website.
  - (b) We have successfully recruited and trained additional Independent Volunteer Supporters (IVS) in the Team.
- 3.16.7 Reducing Parental Conflict (RPC)
- (a) We have successfully recruited to the RPC Coordinator who joined the team in Spring 2023.
  - (b) We have increased the strategic awareness of the RPC agenda.
  - (c) We have developed a range of practical tools for parents and professionals alike.
  - (d) We have designed and developed, as well as obtained other exiting learning materials for families.
  - (e) We have brought into Bromley a therapeutic intervention led by Coram for families.
- 3.16.8 Social Communications (ASC) Family Support Coordinator for the Borough:
- (a) We have developed and streamlined the referral pathway to make the process easier for parents with an online portal system.
  - (b) We have delivered on the 'graduated approach' and achieved a lower reliance on specialist support and an increase in families accessing support from universal and targeted services.

### 3.17 **Future Focus**

3.17.1 The services continue to look for opportunities to enhance service delivery, despite capacity challenges. The following highlights just one or two of our focused pieces of work for each of the service areas within EIFS for the coming year.

3.17.2 Children and Family Centres

- (a) Promote the recently published Commissioned Activities and Services Directory for 2024/25 [\[CLICK HERE\]](#)
  - (b) Develop new outreach plans to target parents of newborns.
  - (c) Explore with our 0-19 provider the viability of pursuing the UNICEF Baby Friendly accreditation.
- 3.17.3 Family Support and Parenting Practitioner
- (a) To develop our reporting and explore referral data to target agencies not referring families for support.
  - (b) To develop a new Multi Agency Partnership Event (MAPE) to enable partners to successfully navigate the support available and the Children and Families Hub Front Door.
- 3.17.4 Parenting Offer
- (a) To continue to ensure all new Family Support and Parenting Practitioners are trained in the suite of our evidence based parenting courses
  - (b) To develop a seminar to increase parental awareness and understanding of drugs and other substances that their children may experience with and to know appropriate strategies and support pathways.
- 3.17.5 Children's Contact Centres
- (a) Following the challenges with the Orpington Children's Contact Centre, to identify suitable places to deliver 'Family Time' that can be developed into high quality child friendly family time spaces.
  - (b) To develop a suite of reports to support practice delivery and drive service improvement.
- 3.17.6 Information Advice and Support Service –
- (a) To recruit additional Independent Volunteer Supporters.
  - (b) To develop information and advice in formats designed to target young people.
- 3.17.7 Reducing Parental Conflict
- (a) The development and delivery of a campaign designed and developed to raise awareness across a 6-week period on social media.
  - (b) The development and delivery of a suite of 6 micro sessions designed to run over lunch periods for professionals to access. 1 hour only with a specific theme.
- 3.17.8 Social Communication (inc. Autism) Needs Targeted Support Coordinator
- (a) To develop the data capture and reporting to evidence the impact of the service.
  - (b) To identify opportunities and partners with whom to publicise the service and support available to families.
- 3.17.9 General
- (a) To continue to look for opportunities to work with new partners to broaden the offer to families under our one stop shop model
  - (b) To continue to look for cost savings on resources that need to be purchased consumables for the sites
  - (c) To reduce our reliance on paper and digitalise supporting staff to prepare for the move to Churchill Court and a new hot-desk model of working.
  - (d) To make better use of the local authority's publicity options including the JCDecaux digital boards and working more closely with Bromley's Libraries.

#### **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 past 12 months.

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., 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.

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