

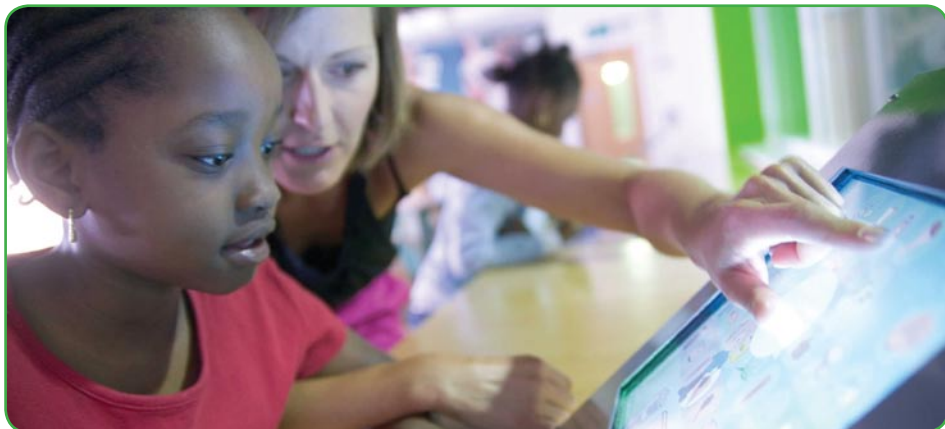
The schools project

This project will involve working with a cluster of schools – possibly one secondary school and the primary schools that feed it, plus the relevant children's centres. The aim would be to work with staff to identify those groups of children that are likely to be at risk of experiencing some form of social, educational or psychological disadvantage - for example, children who were just about coping in the more nurturing culture of a primary school, but who will struggle with transition to secondary. The aim would be to find effective ways of working with these children and their parents so that the risk factors are nipped in the bud.

The health project

This project will focus on developing a multi-agency approach to a range of family and child health promotion issues. This will include work on smoking cessation, maternal mental health support, immunisations, and the promotion of breast-feeding and healthy eating as part of a strategy to reduce childhood obesity. The aim will be to co-ordinate and develop our public health initiatives into a more structured partnership approach involving all public agencies working with children.

These projects will run over the coming years to help agencies learn and develop the skills and knowledge of how to refocus services on prevention and early intervention.



The Prevention and Early Intervention Framework



"We have to provide the right balance of services, working to do increasingly more that is prevention and early intervention so that children have the best chance of thriving from an early age and of getting any extra help as soon as they need it".

One of the key themes that runs through the Children and Young People's Plan is that of re-thinking and refocusing services so that children get help at an earlier stage. The partners have developed a Prevention and Early Intervention Framework as a vehicle to drive this forward.

The Concept

Children can be helped in three broad ways:

- so that problems don't arise in the first place (prevention)
- so that problems are nipped in the bud (early intervention)
- so that something is in place for needs or problems that are serious or will endure (treatment).

There will always be a need for some level of intervention at all three stages. But the current balance and distribution of resources has developed in an unplanned way over the years. Spending money wisely in future requires clarity and direction about what has the best chance of making a positive difference to children's lives. We are looking to everyone to help us work out how to put more emphasis on prevention and early intervention.

The care system, mental health in-patient services and youth offending institutions are all examples of the treatment form of intervention. We know that these services cost a great deal of money but for many children and young people do not deliver significantly improved outcomes.

The Framework presents this challenge: could we use some of the money we currently spend on these treatment services and instead invest it in services that prevent problems arising in the first place or get effective help to children when the problems first arise?

There is a growing body of research evidence that suggests that intervention as early as possible pays off.

The Challenge

If our overall direction is to focus more on prevention and early intervention, how do we do this? The Prevention and Early Intervention Framework identifies three ways forward.

First, all those in the borough who impact on the lives of children are asked to reflect on what they currently do and how it affects children's lives – and then to ask themselves:

"Could we, within the limits of our existing resources, do things differently, so that we get help to children at an earlier stage?"

The main Prevention and Early Intervention Framework document is intended to be used as a tool to spark discussion by groups of managers and staff at all levels within different agencies. If prevention and early intervention is to become more of a reality, then it will be at these front-line points where the change really needs to take place.

Copies of the document can be obtained from Kevin Gordon at kevin.gordon@islington.gov.uk. Arrangements can be made for lead officers to attend staff and management meetings to lead discussions.

Secondly, when agencies make spending plans, they are asked to review the balance between the three types of intervention and consider how resources might be moved.

Thirdly, partner agencies have identified three high profile projects to model the implementation of the new approach.

The Packington Estate redevelopment project

The built environment and physical living conditions have a big impact on the welfare of children – which can be either positive or damaging. The Packington Estate is to be re-developed over the coming years; this will involve building a completely new estate. This project will work alongside the developers to help to develop the new estate in a way which positively promotes the welfare of the children who will live there.