

Annex A – Covering Template for Responses

Please complete the attached cover sheet when sending evidence, indicating the set of questions to which a response is being provided and contact details of the person for any follow-up queries.

Contact details for respondent	
Name	
Job title	Programme Manager Gateshead Children's fund Barnardos
Do you represent an organisation? (if so, name of organisation and type: e.g. voluntary, public body, private company).	Comments written from a personal capacity drawing on work with Children's Fund and Gateshead Preventative strategy and Targeted Youth Support
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	Which area of the review are you responding to? (please mark X)
Prevention strand	X
Review of disabled children	
Strategy for youth services	
Review of high cost, high harm families	X comments relevant to this also

Comprehensive Spending Review 2007 -Call for evidence

Response from Richard Taylor Children's Fund Programme Manager Gateshead.

Please note that these are my personal views not those of Gateshead Council or Strategic partnership or Barnardos.

Background

I have been Children's Fund Programme Manager in Gateshead employed by Barnardos for the past 5 years. I am the lead in Gateshead on behalf of the Children and Young People's Partnership for the development of a preventative strategy and am currently involved in the Targeted Youth Support pilot as a workstream lead. Prior to that I managed a Barnardos project for fifteen years in the North East of England which was a drop in centre for young people. Most of those who attended in the age group 16-25 had problems associated with drug use poor mental health and homelessness. Few had meaningful relationships with parents and some had children themselves. Previously to that I worked in local authority youth service for twenty years in inner urban areas.

This response is therefore based on a lifetime of experience of work with disadvantaged children young people families and communities as practitioner, manager and funder.

What evidence is there of major barriers to developing a preventative system? Are there examples where you have overcome these barriers?

For the first time in my working life we have a government strategy that is attempting to join up agendas. Every Child Matters is something that can unite children young people families, communities, professionals and voluntary organisations in a common agenda. Children involved with the Children's Fund in Gateshead produced posters outlining what the Every Child Matters outcomes mean to them and they are used widely in schools community centres and other public places to help to reinforce what everyone is hoping to achieve. Much has been achieved so far but at all levels the broad continuing agenda needs to be continually reinforced so that we do not return to our silos. The common language that is being developed here needs reinforcing. The experience of bringing agencies together in Gateshead under the Preventative Strategy taught us that terms such as prevention and early intervention were subject to a variety of interpretations. In Gateshead we adopted the following which we "borrowed" from Queensland Australia as working definitions which we could all own.

Prevention – *Support and promote individual, family and community safety and well being. Aim to build capacity, support self reliance, minimise risk factors and reduce the social and economic cost of intervention.*

Early Intervention - *Early response to an identified risk or problem designed to reduce risk or resolve the problem. Aim to reduce risk, minimise the intervention required, strengthen resilience, improve outcomes and reduce the social and economic cost of further intervention.*

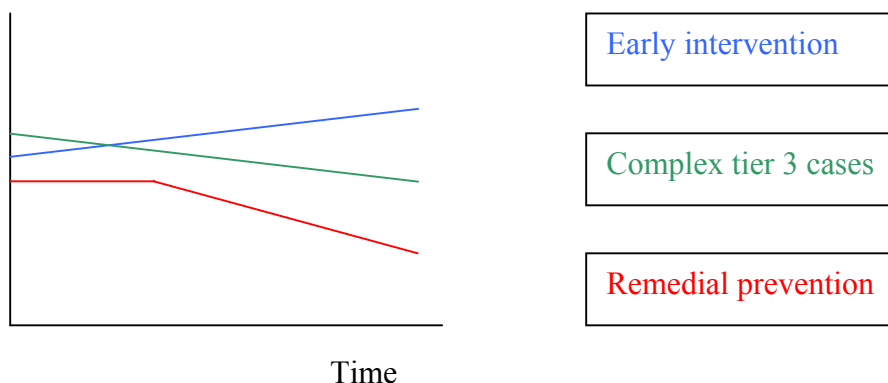
The reason we have adopted these definitions is

Prevention is seen as something that is often delivered through universal services and can be looked at in relation to systemic change

Early intervention on the other hand is frequently individually based and rooted in social care usually delivered through targeted services.

As we have developed our thinking around the common processes that the DFES has been promoting, Information Sharing, common assessment, lead professional have all been received positively but with lots of how questions attached. The challenges that face all those working in this field are immense and success will not be delivered over night. I am currently working with enthusiastic front line practitioners Teachers Education Welfare officers, youth workers youth justice staff, social workers voluntary sector drugs workers as part of the targeted youth support pathfinder. All are constrained by the fact that they have a day job to do with its own targets and if we are to develop a true multi agency response we can only implement change at a pace that they are able to own. This is in a well supported pilot area and not borough wide. It is not just a question of resources although those will be necessary to bridge the gap as we move to more early intervention work in order to fund and support the remedial prevention necessary to catch up on all those needs not met early and it will be some time before a decline in complex tier 3 cases kicks in (see diagram below)

Numbers



The Targeted Youth Support Pathfinder (TYSP) has demonstrated the value of a supported programme of challenge (in this case by the Training and Development agency) but change must be internalised and be then able to be sustained by people on the ground with adequate support and reasonable timescales.

If one takes the issue of information sharing which is key to the successful implementation of preventative work the government's own experience of developing the information sharing practitioners guide is an example in microcosm of the task ahead. All the challenges that the government faced in developing that as it challenged existing barriers and protocols will have to be dealt with again as fundamental principles like Caldecott guidelines and issues of "confidentiality" and "access to information" have to be dealt with at local levels at the same time as dealing with negative press. At a local level we have within the local team people at all points of the spectrum in relation to

this from those who share information too readily and frequently without consent to those who hide behind a confidentiality which is not defensible. Repeat this situation many times over across the country and the scope of the task is illustrated.

The positive side of this is that I and others like me are committed to a process of making it work. “ This is the best opportunity I have seen in 32 years of teaching at this school for achieving positive outcomes for these young people” an assistant head said of the TYSP just last week.

One of the key challenges is to remove the “refer out” syndrome where people assess families only to then deny them a service because they do not reach the threshold. This is not only disheartening to the family concerned but also means that other professionals are unlikely to refer thus denying people even the chance of a service . I am concerned that the Common Assessment Framework will be used as a referral tool which rations services rather than a tool to identify needs. Needs should be able to be met at a local level by providing local commissioning budgets. A Children’s Fund Voluntary Project with funding from a Charitable Trust has been able to do this in the Bensham locality in Gateshead working with a multi agency group identifying needs which included schools as the main initial identifier. I believe the TYSP will only work if we can create capacity within the locally based front line staff for more effective meeting of needs supported by targeted services and with an easy route to a management led series of panels across the borough which will be able to deal with resource implications of unmet needs.

The model currently looks like this (Appendix 1).

One of the key issues that will make this succeed or fail is the engagement of children young people and families. To achieve this overnight is impossible. Scepticism and misunderstandings of the role of various agencies are rife. “Social services only exist to take your kids off you” is a real perception that prevents obstacles to their involvement. The Youth Offending team label is also perceived as a problem but the Children’s Fund funded Amber programme (Youth Inclusion Support Panel) has not had huge difficulties of engaging families once the families believe they are going to get help with their difficulties. There is a similar concern about the role of schools with people who have had poor experiences, but again the right attitude from school staff who genuinely want to engage with families will lead to positive results. Other staff from without the statutory services like youth and community workers and the voluntary sector can valuably broker engagement when potential problems arise. At present the voluntary sector and Cinderella services like youth work do not automatically feel they have a right to be involved and it will be a critical role of change managers to support this process of genuine multi agency working.

In summary in presenting this evidence I am arguing for more of the same with the embedding of the processes already being developed and recognition of the time needed to achieve cultural change. Every Child Matters presents the common vision for us all. The road to get there is a long and rocky one and will need resourcing if we are to both introduce early intervention and cope with the problems that previous lack of intervention have caused.

Appendix 1 GATESHEAD TYSP ‘MERGED MODELS’

