

Newcastle Upon Tyne 1001 Critical Days Think Tank

DRAFT Terms of reference [to be considered by Newcastle's Early Help Board]

Purpose

The Newcastle 1001 Critical Days Think Tank is an informally constituted review, promotion and advisory group composed of willing representatives of public, private, voluntary and community organisations located in Newcastle Upon Tyne who agree to actively support its values, purpose and activities. The secretariat and lead body for the think tank is Newcastle City Council.

The Newcastle 1001 Critical Days Think Tank aims to **improve the promotion and safeguarding of the holistic development and wellbeing of children from the point of conception to 24 months old across the City of Newcastle upon Tyne** through two key objectives:

- To improve the **collective and individual positive impact of actions** of those who review, commission, plan, manage and deliver support to families with children from the point of conception to age two in Newcastle upon Tyne.
- To be an **advocate** for a child-centred, rights based, diverse image of the 0-2 year old child¹, as a valued member of families, institutions and communities across the City.

The think tank is responsible for publishing and reporting on an annual work plan that facilitates these actions to Newcastle's Early Help Board.

Membership

Membership of the Think Tank is open to any individual professionally identified or democratically selected representative of an organisation, service, advocacy groups or parent / carer bodies in Newcastle.

To ensure focus and consistency, the think tank will identify both 'core' and 'reference' members, identified through democratic discussion with the group.

- *Core members* will be comprised of the chair, City Council Head of Service for Early Help and Family Support and work stream leads.
- *Reference members* will receive the same information and access to the work of the group if they choose, but will be those who choose to attend meetings and contribute to the work of the Think Tank as relevant, to ensure effective use of their time and expertise.

In addition to recognising requests to attend meetings and activities from the reference group (in response to the published work plan and general communication of the Think Tank), the Core Group shall also approach reference members to invite their contribution to specific meetings, events or work activities. Invites to contribute to the work of the Think Tank will give equal status and consideration to all members on the basis of their expertise and relevance.

The chair, activity stream leaders and any members with current actions linked to the annual plan will be accountable to the core group of the Think Tank and in turn to Newcastle's *Early Help Board*.

¹ According to the UNCRC: <https://www.unicef.org.uk/what-we-do/un-convention-child-rights/>

These members are also responsible for confirming their role on the Think Tank is endorsed by the organisation or group they are representing.

Review

The membership and activity of the Think Tank will be reviewed against these Terms of Reference and its Annual Work Plan, both by the Core Group and the Early Help Board, taking into account views of members, the CLASP Operational Group and any other stakeholder representations made to it.

Working methods

Meetings: The core group of the Think Tank shall hold a minimum of four meetings per year, which will be organised by the Chair of the group, supported by the secretariat provided by Newcastle City Council.

Activity: Activities of the Think Tank (e.g. meetings, events, projects and communications) will be directed by the Annual Work Plan agreed by the Early Help Board. Specific agenda items for meetings will be identified by work stream leads, in conjunction with relevant parties, taking into account any representations made to them or identified gaps in representation.

Activities of the group focus will be structured into three 'learning and action' work streams that together will form the annual work plan of the Think Tank:

- *Review work stream:* will sample and review key national, regional, sub-regional or local documents² that have bearing on the funding, commissioning, management or practice of services for / with parents-carers and children aged 0-2 years in Newcastle upon Tyne.
- *Research and development work stream:* will draw upon and initiate consultation, analysis and local research activity on topics such as child-parent-carer 'voice', workforce development, governance, commissioning and planning, strategy and practice as they relate to the objectives of the Think Tank³.
- *Advocacy, lobbying and public communication work stream:* will translate the findings of the previous two work streams into recommendations and resources for improvement of systems, services and outcomes for 0-2's and their families.

² Legislation, (Statutory) Guidance, Policy, Strategy, Plans etc.

³ This will build our *local capacity* to develop intelligence and evidence for service improvement.

Methodology and review criteria:

The Think Tank will develop and maintain an explicit analytical “lens” which it will use to undertake its work, so making clear the basis on which it is reviewing, researching and recommending. The development and maintenance of this “lens” will reflect the following principles:

- *Focused*: It will consider evidence and practice in relation to its stated aim and objectives⁴
- *Contextual and reflexive*: It will consider evidence and phenomena in context: for example, individual activities or policies will be considered in relation to other factors that affect its operation⁵. It will also question assumptions and traditions about “how things are done” or “what works”.
- *Pragmatic*: It will focus on those things that offer the greatest potential benefit to children aged 0-2 years and their parents-carers AND are considered reasonably practical to influence / improve.
- *Ethical and relational*: Activity of the Think-Tank should also build professional relationships and trust within the ‘0-2 community’, including babies, parents and carers, reflecting UNCRC values.

Practical tools will be developed by the Think Tank to undertake reviews, research and to communicate recommendations in line with its “lens”⁶

Records: Minutes of any formal Think Tank meeting shall be recorded and distributed / made available to members by electronic means. Handling and publication of data shall comply with relevant legislation and regulation (e.g. General Data Protection Regulations).

Public communication: The Think Tank will promote positive, constructive and thought provoking dialogue with other bodies and the general public through records of meetings, publications and any relevant campaigns. Formal, public and informal communication on behalf of and within the Think tank will promote constructive partnership dialogue for shared understanding. Actions to influence or make recommendations to organisations or public bodies shall be undertaken by the Think Tank in a constructive way that seeks to build understanding and trust with others.

⁴ e.g. any policy, activity or debate will be considered in relation to how it can help promote the safeguarding, holistic development and wellbeing of babies.

⁵ Key principles from research into complex systems theory, or practice theory, are a good example.

⁶ Such as review grids, workshops, and tools for practice.

Definition of terms

Early Help:

- “Early Help is a way of describing the extra support your family can receive if you need it. It maybe that you want to prevent a problem or change things for your family before the problem becomes more serious. It is a voluntary and we need your consent.” (Early Help, *Newcastle City Council*, <https://www.newcastle.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/childrens-social-care/early-help>)

Early Intervention:

- “Early intervention means identifying and providing effective early support to children and young people who are at risk of poor outcomes.” (What is Early Intervention?, *Early Intervention Foundation*, <https://www.eif.org.uk/why-it-matters/what-is-early-intervention/>)

Useful points of reference

- UNICEF: “Early Childhood Development”: <https://www.unicef.org/early-childhood-development>
- 1001 Critical Days: The importance of conception to age two period (PDF): https://www.1001criticaldays.co.uk/sites/default/files/1001%20days_oct16_1st.pdf
- The Association for Infant Mental Health, UK (webpage): <https://aimh.org.uk/about/>

Document History:

- Initial scoping discussion with Dr Ian Robson (Northumbria University), Deborah Ramshaw (Newcastle City Council) and Val Hobson (Action 4 Children), 8.3.19.
- First draft 22.3.19 by Dr Ian Robson, Northumbria University.