



Research Report: Understanding and Defining “Good Help” for Marginalized and Minoritized Parents in Ealing: September 2024

1. Introduction and Context

The goal of this research was to determine what "good help" looks like for marginalized and minoritized families in the London borough of Ealing when accessing family support services for their children aged 0 to 19 years. By engaging directly with parents, we aimed to identify the challenges they face and to establish effective support practices tailored to their needs.

Golden Opportunity and Skills Development (GOS&D) has consistently been an organization dedicated to understanding and advocating for the needs—both existing and emerging—of all Ealing residents, particularly those who are marginalized and feel unheard or unsupported. We welcome the council’s approach and commitment to consulting and empowering parents, enabling them to influence how the council designs and delivers its services to support families across the borough. In supporting the council’s discovery and consultation process to establish a 'Start for Life/Family Hub' model of accessible and integrated early help and support for Ealing families, GOS&D had been tasked with meeting the following project objectives:

- To co-design a project in which parents and family members come together to create a ‘solutions focused’ vision of ‘good help’ for families
- We want to understand how families would describe what ‘good help’ looks and feels like for them.
- Set out ‘good help’ principles
- Set out a ‘good help’ value statement and solutions focused recommendations which will assist in the development in our next phase of the Family hub programme, in which we will be prototyping a place-based approach.



2. Methodology

This research involved qualitative and quantitative approaches, including focus groups, in-depth interviews, and questionnaires. A total of 77 parents, aged between 22 and 46 years, participated in the study. These parents were identified based on their struggles in accessing services for themselves and their children. The group comprised 55 mothers and 22 fathers, all of whom had English as a second language. Notably, 18 of the parents were raising children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

3. Key Findings

A. Barriers to Accessing Services

1. Language Barriers:

- All 77 parents reported difficulties in accessing services due to language barriers. Many parents struggled to understand complex service procedures, forms, and communication from service providers, which led to delays and frustration.
- Parents expressed a need for more translated materials and access to interpreters who could assist them in navigating these services.

2. Lack of Information and Awareness:

- A significant number of parents (65%) indicated that they were unaware of available services or how to access them. This was particularly pronounced among those raising children with SEND, who often did not know where to seek specialized support.
- Parents highlighted the importance of community outreach programs that proactively inform and educate them about available resources.

3. Bureaucratic Challenges:

- Many parents (72%) felt overwhelmed by the bureaucracy involved in accessing services. The complexity of application processes, long waiting times, and a lack of clear communication from service providers were commonly cited as obstacles.



- Parents raising children with SEND reported additional layers of complexity in securing appropriate support, often facing repeated assessments and insufficient assistance.

B. Quality of Support

4. Cultural and Linguistic Sensitivity:

- The majority of parents (80%) felt that the services they received were not culturally or linguistically sensitive. Many expressed frustrations with service providers who did not understand or respect their cultural backgrounds, leading to feelings of alienation.
- Parents recommended training for service providers in cultural competence and the employment of staff who reflect the diverse communities they serve.

5. Support for SEND:

- Parents of children with SEND reported significant challenges in accessing specialized services. Many felt that their children's needs were not adequately understood or met by service providers, resulting in gaps in care and support.
- Parents emphasized the need for more tailored services that specifically address the unique needs of children with SEND, including better coordination between health, education, and social services.

C. What “Good Help” Looks Like

6. Personalized and Accessible Services:

- Parents overwhelmingly (92%) expressed a desire for services that are personalized and accessible. They stressed the importance of being treated as individuals with unique needs rather than as cases to be processed.
- "Good help" was described as support that is responsive, empathetic, and easy to access without unnecessary delays or bureaucratic hurdles.



7. Proactive Communication and Follow-Up:

- Effective communication was highlighted as a key aspect of good help. Parents wanted service providers to communicate clearly, in their preferred language, and to follow up on their cases without needing constant reminders.
- Regular check-ins from service providers were seen as a sign of genuine concern and commitment to helping families succeed.

8. Collaborative Problem-Solving:

- Many parents (85%) valued a collaborative approach where they are involved in decision-making processes regarding their children's care and support.
- They appreciated service providers who listened to their concerns, respected their input, and worked with them to find solutions that best meet their family's needs.

4. Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed to improve service delivery for marginalized and minoritized families in Ealing:

9. Enhance Language Support:

- Increase the availability of translated materials and professional interpreters to help parents navigate services more effectively.
- Provide language-specific support groups to foster community and peer assistance.

10. Strengthen Community Outreach:

- Develop targeted outreach programs to inform marginalized and minoritized families about available services and how to access them.
- Utilize local community centers, schools, and faith organizations to disseminate information.

11. Simplify Service Access:

- Streamline application processes and reduce bureaucratic barriers that prevent timely access to services.



- Implement a “one-stop-shop” model where families can access multiple services through a single point of contact.

12. Improve Cultural Competence:

- Train service providers in cultural sensitivity and the importance of understanding diverse backgrounds.
- Recruit staff from within the communities they serve to bridge cultural gaps and build trust.

13. Enhance SEND Support:

- Provide more tailored and coordinated support for families with children who have SEND.
- Ensure that SEND services are well-integrated across health, education, and social care to meet the holistic needs of these families.

14. Foster Collaborative Relationships:

- Encourage service providers to adopt a collaborative approach that actively involves parents in decision-making.
- Establish regular follow-up practices to ensure that families feel supported and valued throughout their interactions with services.

5. Conclusion

This research highlights the significant challenges that marginalized and minoritized parents in Ealing face in accessing family support services. It also provides a clear understanding of what "good help" looks like for these families: personalized, accessible, culturally sensitive, and collaborative. By implementing the recommendations outlined in this report, service providers in Ealing can better meet the needs of these families and improve outcomes for children across the borough.

Co-Designed Project: Creating a Solutions-Focused Vision of “Good Help” for Families



1. Project Overview

Objective: To co-design a project where parents and family members collaboratively create a solutions-focused vision of what "good help" looks and feels like for marginalized and minoritized families in Ealing, focusing on accessing family support services for children aged 0 to 19 years.

This project builds on earlier research by involving the parents directly in defining and shaping the support services that best meet their needs. This approach empowers families to articulate their experiences and vision, fostering ownership and collaboration between the community and service providers.

2. Project Phases

Phase 1: Engagement and Recruitment

- **Objective:** To bring together a diverse group of parents who have faced challenges in accessing services, ensuring their voices shape the vision of "good help."
- **Activities:**
 - **Recruitment:** 36 parents who took part in the initial research phase were recruited for the co-design project. This group included a mix of ethnic backgrounds, languages, and experiences, ensuring a diverse range of perspectives.
 - **Introduction Session:** Hosted an introductory session to outline the project's purpose, process, and goals, and to build rapport among participants.

Phase 2: Co-Design Workshops

- **Objective:** To facilitate workshops where parents collaboratively define what "good help" looks like, focusing on practical, solutions-oriented outcomes.
- **Participants:** All 36 parents from the research phase took part in these workshops.
- **Activities:**
 - **Workshop 1: Understanding Current Experiences**



- ♣ **Discussion:** Participants shared their personal experiences and the barriers they faced when accessing services.
- ♣ **Outcome:** Parents identified common challenges, including language barriers, lack of culturally sensitive services, and bureaucratic hurdles.
- **Workshop 2: Visioning "Good Help"**
 - ♣ **Brainstorming:** Participants envisioned what ideal support services would look like, focusing on how “good help” should feel and be delivered.
 - ♣ **Prioritizing:** Participants voted on the most important aspects of “good help,” such as personalized services, proactive communication, and cultural sensitivity.
 - ♣ **Outcome:** A shared vision of “good help” was developed, emphasizing the need for accessible, empathetic, and culturally aware services.
- **Workshop 3: Co-Creating Solutions**
 - ♣ **Prototyping:** Small groups worked to develop practical solutions based on the agreed-upon elements of “good help.” These included ideas for service models, communication strategies, and support mechanisms.
 - ♣ **Feedback Loop:** Solutions were presented to the larger group for feedback, with revisions made to ensure all perspectives were incorporated.
 - ♣ **Outcome:** Concrete solutions were developed, such as a proposal for a “one-stop-shop” service center, culturally competent staff training, and improved language support.

Phase 3: Development of the “Good Help” Vision Document

- **Objective:** To compile the outcomes of the co-design workshops into a comprehensive vision document that reflects the collective input of the families.
- **Activities:**
 - **Drafting:** A small team of participants worked with facilitators to draft the “Good Help” value statement document, ensuring it accurately reflected the workshop findings.



- **Finalization:** The statement document was finalized and prepared for presentation to service providers, local authorities, and other stakeholders.

Phase 4: Presentation and Advocacy

- **Objective:** To present the “Good Help” value statement to key stakeholders and advocate for its adoption in service delivery.

Phase 5: Implementation and Monitoring

- **Objective:** To support the implementation of the “Good Help” vision and monitor its impact on service delivery.

4. Sustainability and Future Directions

To ensure the sustainability of the project, it is recommended to:

- **Establish a Parent Advisory Group:** Form a group of participating parents who can continue to advise service providers on family support issues.
- **Regular Review Sessions:** Hold annual review sessions to update the “Good Help” vision as needed, ensuring it remains relevant to the evolving needs of families.
- **Expand the Model:** Consider expanding the co-design approach to other areas of service delivery, such as health, education, and employment support, to further enhance the well-being of marginalized and minoritized communities in Ealing.

This co-designed project not only defines what "good help" is but also lays the foundation for a community-led transformation of family support services in Ealing. By directly involving families in the process, this project ensures that the solutions developed are both practical and aligned with the real needs and experiences of those it aims to serve.

What "Good Help" Looks Like When Parents Try to Access Support for Their Families



Understanding the Need for "Good Help": Parents, especially those from marginalized and minoritized communities, often face significant challenges when trying to access support for their families. These challenges can be compounded by language barriers, cultural differences, and bureaucratic complexities. For parents of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), these difficulties can be even more pronounced.

Key Elements of "Good Help":

1. Accessibility:

- **Ease of Communication:** Services should be easy to access, with clear communication channels. This includes providing information in multiple languages and ensuring that support is available through various mediums (in-person, online, phone).
- **Physical Accessibility:** Services should be located in easily reachable areas, considering transportation and mobility challenges.

2. Cultural Sensitivity:

- **Respect for Cultural Differences:** Support services should be aware of and sensitive to the cultural backgrounds of the families they serve. This includes understanding different cultural norms, practices, and family structures.
- **Culturally Competent Staff:** Service providers should be trained in cultural competency to better understand and address the unique needs of diverse families.

3. Empathy and Understanding:

- **Compassionate Approach:** Families want to feel that service providers genuinely care about their well-being. This involves listening without judgment and showing empathy for their situations.
- **Personalized Support:** Good help is tailored to the specific needs of each family, recognizing that a one-size-fits-all approach is not effective.

4. Proactive Communication:

- **Clear and Regular Updates:** Families should be kept informed about the status of their requests and the support available to them. Proactive communication helps prevent misunderstandings and reduces anxiety.



- **Transparent Processes:** Parents appreciate it when service processes are clear, with steps and timelines that are easy to follow.
5. **Collaboration and Partnership:**
- **Working Together:** Families want to be seen as partners in the process, where their input is valued and considered in decision-making.
 - **Support Networks:** Good help also involves connecting families with other support networks, including community groups, educational institutions, and healthcare providers.
6. **Timeliness and Efficiency:**
- **Swift Response:** Families often face urgent situations, especially when it involves the safety and well-being of children. Good help responds quickly to these needs, minimizing delays.
 - **Effective Resolution:** Beyond just responding quickly, effective help involves resolving issues efficiently, without unnecessary back-and-forth or bureaucratic hurdles.
7. **Advocacy and Empowerment:**
- **Empowering Parents:** Good help involves empowering parents with the knowledge and tools they need to advocate for themselves and their children.
 - **Representation:** In cases where parents struggle to navigate systems on their own, good help includes advocacy support from professionals who can represent their interests.
8. **Emotional and Psychological Support:**
- **Holistic Care:** Beyond practical support, families often need emotional and psychological assistance, especially when dealing with complex or stressful situations. Good help recognizes the importance of mental and emotional well-being in the overall support process.

Real-World Application: In practice, "good help" means that when a parent reaches out for support—whether it's for housing, education, healthcare, or social services—they are met with a system that understands their unique needs and is equipped to meet those needs effectively and compassionately. This involves a coordinated effort between service providers, community



organizations, and the families themselves to ensure that the help provided is not just adequate, but truly supportive in a meaningful way.

Principles of “Good Help” for Parents in Need of Family Support

Context and Collaboration:

These principles were developed with the active participation of 14 parents who took part in both the research and co-designing sessions. Their insights and lived experiences were instrumental in shaping a vision of what "good help" should look like for families, particularly those from marginalized and minoritized communities.

1. Accessibility

- **Inclusive Communication:** Ensure that all information is provided in a language that parents understand, and in formats that are accessible (e.g., translated materials, interpreters, and visual aids).
- **Physical and Digital Accessibility:** Services should be conveniently located and easily accessible via public transport. Digital services should be easy to navigate, with additional support for those unfamiliar with technology.

2. Cultural Sensitivity

- **Respect for Cultural and Linguistic Diversity:** Services should recognize and respect cultural differences, ensuring that support is aligned with the cultural practices and values of the families.



- **Culturally Competent Staffing:** Service providers should receive training in cultural competency, ensuring they understand and appropriately respond to the cultural needs of the families they serve.

3. Empathy and Understanding

- **Compassionate Engagement:** Engage with families in a way that is empathetic and understanding, recognizing the unique challenges they face. Service providers should listen actively and without judgment.
- **Personalized Support:** Tailor support to the specific circumstances of each family, recognizing that each situation is unique and requires a personalized approach.

4. Proactive and Transparent Communication

- **Clear, Honest Communication:** Maintain open lines of communication, providing families with clear, accurate, and timely information about the services available to them and the steps they need to take.
- **Regular Updates:** Keep families informed about the progress of their cases and any changes that may affect them, reducing uncertainty and anxiety.

5. Collaboration and Partnership

- **Co-Creation of Solutions:** Involve parents as partners in designing and delivering services, ensuring that their voices are heard, and their input is valued.
- **Building Support Networks:** Facilitate connections between families and other support networks, including community organizations, schools, and healthcare providers, to create a comprehensive support system.



6. Timeliness and Efficiency

- **Prompt Responses to Urgent Needs:** Respond swiftly to the needs of families, particularly in urgent situations, such as those involving safety or health concerns.
- **Streamlined Processes:** Minimize bureaucratic delays and ensure that services are delivered in an efficient, timely manner, reducing the stress and burden on families.

7. Advocacy and Empowerment

- **Empowering Parents:** Provide parents with the knowledge, tools, and resources they need to advocate for themselves and their children, fostering independence and confidence.
- **Representation and Advocacy Support:** Offer advocacy services to help parents navigate complex systems, ensuring that their rights and needs are effectively represented.

8. Holistic and Integrated Support

- **Whole-Family Approach:** Recognize and address the needs of the entire family, rather than focusing solely on the child or parent. This includes supporting the mental, emotional, and physical well-being of all family members.
- **Integrated Services:** Ensure that services are well-coordinated across different sectors (e.g., health, education, housing), providing seamless support that addresses all aspects of a family's needs.

9. Respect and Dignity

- **Treating Families with Respect:** Ensure that all interactions with families are conducted with the utmost respect and dignity, recognizing their inherent value and worth.
- **Dehumanization Prevention:** Avoid practices that may dehumanize or marginalize parents, such as unnecessary delays, excessive paperwork, or impersonal service delivery.



10. Sustainability and Long-Term Support

- **Ongoing Support:** Provide continuous support, not just short-term solutions, ensuring that families have the resources and guidance they need to achieve long-term stability and success.
- **Feedback and Improvement:** Regularly seek feedback from families and use it to improve services, ensuring that the principles of “good help” evolve in response to changing needs and circumstances.

Collaborative Foundation:

The principles outlined above were co-created with the assistance of 14 parents who participated in the research and co-design sessions. Their contributions have ensured that these principles truly reflect the needs and experiences of families who are most in need of support. These principles aim to guide service providers, community organizations, and policymakers in delivering the kind of help that makes a meaningful difference in the lives of these families.

‘Good Help’ Value Statement

Our Commitment:

At Ealing Council, we are dedicated to providing support that is accessible, empathetic, culturally sensitive, and effective for all families, particularly those from marginalized and minoritized communities. We believe that every family deserves respect, dignity, and the opportunity to thrive. Our goal is to empower families through collaborative and holistic approaches that address their unique needs and challenges.

Our Values:



1. **Accessibility:** We ensure that our services are easy to access, inclusive, and available to everyone, regardless of language, culture, or location.
2. **Cultural Sensitivity:** We respect and honor the diverse backgrounds of the families we serve, ensuring that our support is culturally informed and relevant.
3. **Empathy:** We listen with compassion, understanding that every family's situation is unique and requires personalized care.
4. **Collaboration:** We work in partnership with families, valuing their input and involving them in the decision-making process to create solutions that work for them.
5. **Transparency:** We maintain open and honest communication, providing clear information and regular updates to families.
6. **Sustainability:** We offer continuous, long-term support that empowers families to achieve stability and success.

Development and Adoption:

This value statement has been developed with the invaluable assistance of 14 parents who participated in our research and co-designing process. Their insights and lived experiences have shaped these principles, which reflect their needs and aspirations. As part of our commitment to improving support for marginalized families, we, as the local authority, embrace these values and are dedicated to putting them into effective practice.

Solutions-Focused Recommendations

1. Enhance Service Accessibility and Communication:

- **Multi-Language Support:** We will provide all materials and services in multiple languages, with translators available to assist non-English-speaking families.
- **Outreach Programs:** We will establish community-based outreach initiatives to ensure that marginalized families are aware of the services available to them.
- **Simplified Processes:** We will reduce bureaucratic complexity by simplifying application processes and providing clear, step-by-step guidance for families.



2. Culturally Competent Service Delivery:

- **Cultural Competency Training:** We will mandate regular training for our service providers on cultural sensitivity, focusing on understanding and respecting the diverse needs of minority communities.
- **Culturally Appropriate Resources:** We will develop resources and materials that are culturally relevant and respectful, ensuring they resonate with the families' values and traditions.

3. Empower Families Through Advocacy and Education:

- **Advocacy Support:** We will offer dedicated advocacy services to help families navigate complex systems, ensuring their voices are heard and their rights are protected.
- **Educational Workshops:** We will provide workshops that empower parents with the knowledge and tools they need to advocate for themselves and their children, covering topics such as navigating social services, understanding educational rights, and accessing healthcare.

4. Foster Collaborative Partnerships:

- **Community Engagement:** We will build stronger partnerships with community organizations that are trusted by marginalized families, using these connections to improve service delivery and outreach.
- **Parent-Led Advisory Groups:** We will establish advisory groups composed of parents from minority communities to provide ongoing feedback and ensure that services are meeting their needs.

5. Address Urgent Needs with Timely and Efficient Support:

- **Rapid Response Teams:** We will create specialized teams to respond quickly to urgent situations, such as housing instability, safety concerns, or health crises, ensuring that families receive immediate and effective assistance.



- **Streamlined Referral Systems:** We will develop a more efficient referral system to ensure families are connected with the appropriate services quickly and without unnecessary delays.

6. Promote Holistic and Integrated Care:

- **Whole-Family Approach:** We will design services that consider the needs of the entire family, not just individual members, providing comprehensive support that addresses all aspects of their well-being.
- **Integrated Service Networks:** We will foster better coordination between different service providers (e.g., health, education, housing) to create a seamless support network for families.

7. Ensure Respect, Dignity, and Long-Term Support:

- **Respectful Interaction:** We will treat every family with dignity and respect, recognizing their inherent value and right to quality support.
- **Sustainable Solutions:** We will focus on creating long-term, sustainable solutions that help families achieve stability and independence, rather than just addressing immediate needs.

8. Continuous Improvement and Feedback:

- **Regular Feedback Mechanisms:** We will implement regular feedback channels where families can share their experiences and suggestions for improvement, ensuring services evolve to meet their needs.
- **Responsive Adaptation:** We will use feedback to continuously improve services, adapting to changing needs and emerging challenges in the community.

Call _____ **to** _____ **Action:**
We, Ealing Council, are committed to adopting these solutions-focused recommendations and implementing them effectively. By doing so, we aim to ensure that marginalized and minoritized



families receive the "good help" they need to overcome barriers and thrive within their communities.