

# EARLY HELP STRATEGY

2020-2023

We know that for many children, young people and families York is a great place to live and grow up. However we also know that isn't the story for everyone. Still too often challenges and emerging difficulties in families lives mean children don't achieve their full potential. In some cases these challenges grow meaning that families needing more intrusive and higher level interventions.

The early help strategy sets out how all partners in York will work together to achieve:

	Resilient communities and families	Give children the best start in life	The right help at the right time	Manage demand
<b>What we want to achieve</b>	Support families and communities to be resilient and to support each other.	Recognising the enduring impact of early years experiences give children the best start to life.	Identify emerging need early and providing proportionate, evidenced based support.  Supporting safe and effective step-down from statutory interventions.	The early help strategy is particularly focused on safely reducing demand for: Statutory interventions to safeguard children Mental health Youth Justice
<b>Indicators</b>	<p>Increased engagement with the universal offer of the Healthy Child Service and mandated contacts.</p> <p>Reduce the percentage of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) in aged 16 to 18.</p> <p>Reduction in hospital admissions for self-harm.</p> <p>Reduction in childhood obesity.</p>	<p>Narrow the FSM/non-FSM gap of children achieving a good level of development (EYFS)</p> <p>Increase the % of 'good' or 'outstanding' rated childcare provision.</p> <p>Increase take up of two year old funded childcare places.</p> <p>Increase the percentage of 3 and 4 year olds accessing funded childcare.</p>	<p>FEHA audits and outcome evaluation.</p> <p>Reducing the number of cases repeatedly entering above an early help level.</p> <p>Reduce inappropriate referrals for services above early help.</p> <p>Number of children and young people reporting increased wellbeing and resilience (School Well-being Service)</p> <p>Reduce persistent absence and exclusions in primary and secondary schools.</p>	<p>Reduction in new safeguarding interventions (CIN, CP and CIC) per 10k.</p> <p>Reducing CAMHS interventions per 10k.</p> <p>Number of new Education, Health and Care Plans per 10k.</p> <p>Reduce new entrants to the Youth Justice system per 10k.</p>

## WHY EARLY HELP

There is a weight of research that makes the case for the importance of early help.

<p><b>Early Intervention: The Next Steps<sup>1</sup></b></p> <p>An Independent Report to Her Majesty's Government Graham Allen MP</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early Intervention enables every baby, child and young person to acquire the social and emotional foundations upon which our success as human beings depends.</li> <li>• Those denied these qualities have a bad start and few of them recover. During their lifetimes they can impose heavy penalties on themselves and generate major costs, financial and social, for their families, local communities and the national economy.</li> <li>• There are no quick fixes, no magic bullet, just a long-term programme of hard work.</li> </ul>
<p><b>The Munro Review of Child Protection: A child-centred system<sup>2</sup></b></p> <p>Professor Eileen Munro</p>	<p>The arguments for early help are three-fold. First there is the moral argument for minimising adverse experiences for children and young people. Secondly, there is the argument of 'now or never' arising from the evidence of how difficult it is to reverse damage to children and young people's development. The third argument is that it is cost-effective when current expenditure is compared with estimated expenditure if serious problems develop later.</p> <p>From this review's point of view the three key messages are that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• preventative services will do more to reduce abuse and neglect than reactive services;</li> <li>• coordination of services is important to maximise efficiency; and</li> <li>• within preventative services, there need to be good mechanisms for helping people identify those children and young people who are suffering or likely to suffer harm from abuse or neglect and who need referral to children's social care.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Fair Society Healthy Lives (The Marmot Review)<sup>3</sup></b></p> <p>Strategic review of health inequalities in England post-2010</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The benefits of reducing health inequalities are economic as well as social. The cost of health inequalities can be measured in human terms, years of life lost and years of active life lost; and in economic terms, by the cost to the economy of additional illness.</li> <li>• If everyone in England had the same death rates as the most advantaged, people who are currently dying prematurely as a result of health inequalities would, in total, have enjoyed between 1.3 and 2.5 million extra years of life.</li> <li>• It is estimated that inequality in illness accounts for productivity losses of £31-33 billion per year, lost taxes and</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-intervention-the-next-steps--2>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/munro-review-of-child-protection-final-report-a-child-centred-system>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/resources-reports/fair-society-healthy-lives-the-marmot-review>

	<p>higher welfare payments in the range of £20-32 billion per year, and additional.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• If no action is taken, the cost of treating the various illnesses that result from inequalities in the level of obesity alone will rise from £2 billion per year to nearly £5 billion per year in 2 025.</li></ul>
--	--

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018<sup>4</sup> sets out the rationale for providing early help and provides clear expectations of all partners in relation to early help.

“Providing Early Help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later. Early Help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child’s life, from the foundation years through to the teenage years. Early Help can also prevent further problems arising, for example, if it is provided as part of a support plan where a child has returned home to their family from care.”

**Effective early help relies upon local organisations and agencies working together to:**

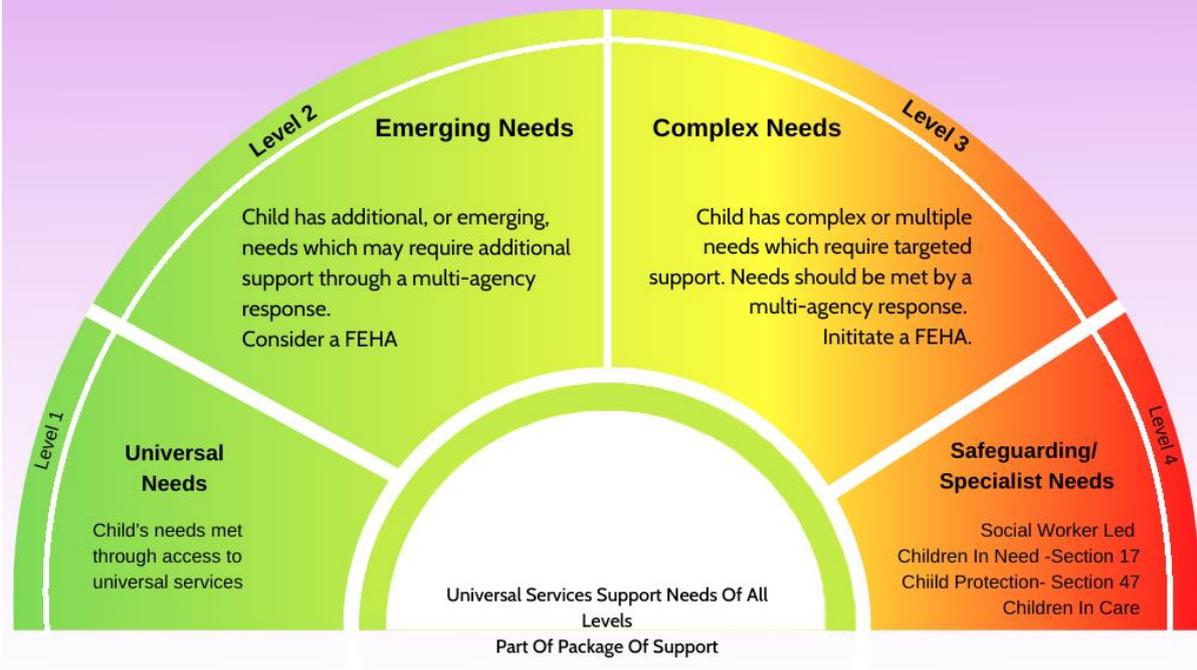
- **identify children and families who would benefit from early help**
- **undertake an assessment of the need for early help**
- **provide targeted early help services to address the assessed needs of a child and their family which focuses on activity to improve the outcomes for the child**

## DEFINING EARLY HELP

---

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>

## LEVELS OF NEED AND RESPONSE



Underlying our definition of early help is a common understanding of levels of need which recognises that only a small number of children and young people in York will have **acute needs** requiring the most intensive sort of statutory intervention set out in legislation. The vast majority will lead happy lives, with access only to **universal** services available to the whole community. In between these two groups there is a group of children and young people who may, for a range of reasons, experience temporary difficulties in their lives. This ranges from those that may have additional or emerging needs through to those with complex needs that require targeted support.

The fundamental purpose of this Early Help Strategy is to create an environment in which vulnerable individuals are identified and engaged with at the earliest point, so that they and their families' needs do not escalate to requiring a statutory and costly intervention.

The Early Help Strategy seamlessly compliments a range of other plans and strategies so that there is a continuity of proportionate and effective arrangements at all levels of need.

The three different levels referenced above are shown in the diagram on the right. For more information about levels of need and thresholds please visit [www.yor-ok.org.uk/thresholds](http://www.yor-ok.org.uk/thresholds).

Level of need	Description
Level 1 – Universal	This group represents the vast majority of families living in York. They experience similar levels of challenge and support in family life. These needs can be met through family networks, communities, community groups, open access provision, GPs, schools, health visitors, commissioned services etc.

Level 2 – Additional Needs	<p>A child may have additional, or emerging, needs which may require support. This could come from a single agency or multi-agency team. Coordinating a multi-agency plan through a Family Early Help Assessment (also known as a Common Assessment Framework) should be considered.</p> <p>Services that may provide additional support includes health visitors, childcare provision, schools, housing, mental health provision, commissioned services, housing, Local Area Teams etc.</p>
Level 3 – Complex needs	<p>A child has complex or multiple needs which require targeted support. They still sit below statutory thresholds and can be supported at an early help level. Needs at this level should be coordinated through a Family Early Help Assessment (also known as a Common Assessment Framework).</p> <p>In addition to support received at level 2 you may expect to see more specialist involvement at this level from mental health provision, youth justice, substance misuse services, domestic abuse services, Local Area Teams etc dependent on need.</p>
Level 4 – Acute needs / statutory response	<p>At this level a child has significant welfare concerns and requires specialist intervention, led by a social worker. This may happen as a Child in Need (section 17) or Child Protection (section 47).</p> <p>Although need at a level 4 is beyond the definition of ‘early help’ a number of different services may continue to support children and families in addressing their needs.</p>

## HOW WE IDENTIFY NEED

Any organisation or agency working with children, young people and families should have mechanisms to identify emerging problems and potential unmet need.

This strategy wants to develop and improve the identification of need in families across the city. Particular groups of children and young people are known to be at greater risk of poor outcomes. Working Together 2018 sets out a list of vulnerabilities that practitioners should be particularly alert to. This is for any child who:

- is disabled and has specific additional needs
- has special educational needs (whether or not they have a statutory Education, Health and Care Plan)
- is a young carer
- is showing signs of being drawn into anti-social or criminal behaviour, including gang involvement and association with organised crime groups
- is frequently missing/goes missing from care or from home
- is at risk of modern slavery, trafficking or exploitation
- is at risk of being radicalised or exploited
- is in a family circumstance presenting challenges for the child, such as drug and alcohol misuse, adult mental health issues and domestic abuse
- is misusing drugs or alcohol themselves

- has returned home to their family from care
- is a privately fostered child

To deliver this strategy partners commit to develop our identification of need by delivering:

- **Annual Early Help Needs Assessment** – Maintain a shared understanding of need in our city. The Early Help Partnership will update an early help needs assessment informed by:
  - The Early Help Strategy scorecard
  - Local Area Team profiles
  - Multi-agency data and intelligence
- **Develop and deliver Multi-Agency Training** – Develop and deliver multi-agency training to support practitioners identify symptoms and triggers of abuse and neglect, share that information and provide children with the help they need. The scope of the training is informed by the annual early help needs assessment and link/compliment training provided through safeguarding arrangements. The Early Help Partnership will review the effectiveness of multi-agency training in relation to early help.
- **Promote the use of shared tools** - We will develop and promote the use of a range of shared tools to support the identification of need.

## HOW WE DELIVER EARLY HELP

### EARLY HELP IS EVERYONES RESPONSIBILITY

**Early help is a collaboration not a service.** In its simplest terms *everyone* is involved in the delivery of early help. This includes families, communities, voluntary groups, “universal” provision, schools, health etc. Many universal agencies will use service specific tools to identify, assess and respond to need. However in order to support our city wide approach to early help and joint working partner agencies have produced common guidance and tools.

The diagram below shows a high level picture of how different agencies sit within the landscape of children’s services and support families with different levels of need.



### NESTA GOOD HELP PRINCIPLES

How early help is delivered matters. Historically early help may do *to* families rather than work *with* them. Where services are created 'fix' families only to return them to the circumstances that first created the issue. NESTA have been carrying out research into establishing the key features and evidence behind the principles of 'good help'. Through the delivery of this early help strategy all partners are agreeing to ensure that the early help they provide meets the Good Help checklist shown below.

1. Recognising and building upon the influence and control that each person brings (power sharing)
2. Having conversations that enable people to feel safe and ready to take action for themselves (enabling language)
3. Helping people define their own purpose and plans, and responding to their individual needs (tailoring)
4. Offering practical and emotional support that helps people take and sustain action, then stepping back as they build confidence to take action alone (scaffolding)
5. Helping people connect with and take action with other people they identify with (role models and peer support)
6. Expanding opportunities for people to take action (opportunity making)
7. Sharing information between practitioners and the people being supported (transparency)

### MULTI-AGENCY SAFEGUARDING HUB AND EARLY HELP CONSULTANCY

In 2019 York introduced a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub or MASH. The purpose of the MASH will provide a single point of access for all concerns about children and will help keep children safe. It is a multi-agency team made up of representatives from a range of services that provide advice, support and protection as needed.

When the MASH receives a referral, the agencies within the team can share information concerning the family with a social worker, who will use this to decide what help the child and family need and whether the child is at risk of harm. The MASH ensures that all referrals are dealt with in a timely and efficient manner so there is no delay for children and that information is shared lawfully within a secure environment.

By sharing information as soon as possible, the team can get a better understanding of what difficulties the family may be facing. This way, we as a safeguarding partnership make sure the family receives the right kind of intervention, help or support at the right time.

This means the MASH can quickly establish if families require early help support at a level 1, 2 or 3 or if a safeguarding intervention at level 4 is required.

Early Help Coordinators within the MASH can provide early help consultancy to support any agency undertaking early help work. Early Help consultancy includes:

- Be the first point of contact for advice and guidance, when an agency is unclear if a contact needs to be made to the Local Authority;
- Advise if the child or family is already open to a children and families service;
- Support others to complete an Early Help Assessment;
- Support lead practitioners across the partnership, to understand and co-ordinate the Team around the Family process;
- Develop skills and knowledge across the partnership around our strengths based approach to the effective delivery of Early Help through briefings, workforce development, advice and guidance;
- Provide support and challenge to agencies completing Early Help Assessments, to ensure that the work they are completing, alongside children and families, has significant and sustained impact.
- Address any drift and delay in early help cases led by partner agencies.
- Hold a discussion with the Early Help Champion when the support has not resolved the problems the family are facing, to agree if a request needs to be made to the MASH for escalation to a level 3 or 4 response.

## LEAD PRACTITIONERS

The role of 'lead practitioner' is a key feature of multi-agency early help practice. A lead practitioner coordinates the input and work of different agencies working in a team around that child and family. They are sometimes referred to as 'the conductor of the orchestra' of support for families. Any practitioner can take on the role of lead practitioner. A lead practitioner should undertake the assessment, provide help to the child and family, act as an advocate on their behalf and co-ordinate the delivery of support services. A GP, family support worker, school nurse, teacher, health visitor and/or special educational needs co-ordinator could undertake the lead practitioner role. It should be informed by who is

working with that family and the views of the children and family as to who is best placed to perform this role.

## FAMILY EARLY HELP ASSESSMENTS

A Family Early Help Assessment (FEHA) is a tool used to assess the needs of children, young people and families to determine the need for early help, and the actions to be taken to improve outcomes, based on a holistic view of the needs of the family. This tool takes you step-by-step through a clear process of information gathering, analysis and action planning.

The FEHA is not just a form; it's a process which allows practitioners to assess needs, identify service delivery requirements and check that needs are being addressed as part of a structured framework. A FEHA is voluntary and should be only be undertaken with consent from the young person or family.

Any practitioner can complete an assessment with the child, young person and family when consent is given. You can contact the MASH and speak to Early Help Coordinators to receive consultancy support with completing a FEHA and ensuring it makes progress and is effective. Targeted early help (level 3) can be accessed by contacting the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub. Where cases are assessed to be level 3 these are reviewed by a multi-agency panel to identify a lead practitioner best placed to lead a FEHA.

## LOCAL AREA TEAMS - LINK WORK AND CONSULTANCY SUPPORT

Staff within Local Area Teams (LATs) provide a critical role in supporting the wider Children's Workforce in the delivery of Early Help both at a case level but also in terms of wider support in accessing support services, appropriate provision for families and training to support their role with children and families.

They will:

### LEVEL 1 - UNIVERSAL

- Provide through our MASH arrangements a *first point of contact* for advice and guidance, when an agency is unclear if a contact needs to be made to the Local Authority;
- We will advise if the child or family is already open to a children and families service;
- We will support others to complete an Early Help Assessment;
- We will support professionals across the partnership, to understand
- and co-ordinate the Team around the Family process;
- Develop skills and knowledge across the partnership around our
- strengths based approach to the effective delivery of Early Help
- through briefings, workforce development, advice and guidance;
- Work closely with our Community and Partnership Service Team to build
- community capacity around these lower levels of need;
- Provide support and challenge to agencies completing Early Help

- Assessments, to ensure that the work they are completing, alongside
- children and families, has significant and sustained impact.

#### LEVEL 2 – LINK SUPPORT TO PARTNERS

- Support schools and other agencies to identify and respond to need and know when the level of need requires escalation to targeted or statutory services – signpost immediately to the MASH arrangements.
- Provide a suite of tools to enable settings to deliver robust Early Help.
- Identify and deliver a responsive Early Help Training Offer to practitioners across the City.
- With the family’s consent, provide the setting with a package of gathered information to support their work including wherever possible partially completed (FEHA) assessment documentation.
- Offer advice around quality of assessments and plans. Support settings in using locally developed QA tools to drive up the quality and consistency of their Early Help work.
- Offer advice on those level 2 cases where the support has not achieved the desired level of change. Offer advice about other services or resources that may help
- Maintain a library of resources, including The Resource Advice Directory that can be shared with practitioners across the City of York Council
- Offer support and pathways for those cases that are “stuck” or where risk levels are increasing

#### LEVEL 3 – TARGET FAMILY SUPPORT

- Targeted Family Support - This will be provided as part of a FEHA and where the family’s needs meet those described in Level 3 of The Levels of Need document. Direct work may include:
  - Parenting support including safety planning and family contracting
  - Developing relationships with young people and supporting their access to services.
  - Support in monitoring progress and management of risk around *neglect*
  - Support in monitoring progress and management of risk around *Child Criminal Exploitation* and *Child Sexual Exploitation*.
- Provide ongoing advice and support to professionals across Early Help at a family/case level.
- Offer advice around quality of assessments and plans. Support settings in using locally developed QA tools to drive up the quality and consistency of their Early Help work.
- Work closely with professionals to address those level 3 cases that have become “stuck” or are at risk of escalation to statutory involvement
- When there is an increased level of risk the Local Area Teams may take on the role of Lead Practitioner.

- When acting as Lead Practitioner Local Area Teams will be responsible for convening and chairing *Team Around the Child & Family* meetings

## STRATEGIC AND GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

The Early Help Partnership is a city wide multi-agency board which is accountable both to the YorOK Board and the Local Safeguarding Children's Partnership (via the Safeguarding Partnership Business Group).

In summary the purpose of the Early Help Partnership is to promote and ensure implementation of effective integrated multi agency arrangements and practices that will support the delivery of early help and intervention services for children, young people and families.

The Early Help Partnership is responsible for:

- The oversight production, publication, delivery and review of the Early Help Strategy.
- Supporting the continuous improvement of multi-agency early help arrangements across York.
- Providing governance oversight of Local Area Team arrangements.
- Reviewing and improve the quality and effectiveness of early help arrangements.
- Supporting the delivery and evaluation of the Troubled Families programme.
- Reporting on the early help agenda to the YorOK Board and Safeguarding Partnership.