

Early Help Strategy 2024-2026

City of York Safeguarding Children Partnership



Contents

Foreword	3
City of York Early Help vision	4
Our shared priorities	5
Our shared ambitions over the next three years	6
What do our families tell us about the importance of Early Help?	7
Why do we need Early Help?.....	9
Levels of need and response	11
Continuum of need	12
City of York Early Help delivery	14
Measurements for success.....	16
Governance	18
Glossary of terms	22



Foreword

This updated multi-agency Early Help Strategy has been developed by the City of York Safeguarding Children Partnership (CYSCP) in consultation with a number of its partners and professionals including Health, Children’s Social Care, Local Authority, Police, Education representatives, Early Years, and other stakeholders within the CYSCP.

The overarching vision of our Early Help Strategy is to **‘ensure that children, young people and their families receive the right help at the right time’** (Working Together, 2023). Our strategy sets out City of York’s vision for Early Help and details the levels of needs for families and responses by professionals, our shared priorities for children and young people, the governance of Early Help and how we will measure our success.

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023) describes: Early Help as support for children of all ages that improves a family’s resilience and outcomes or reduces the chance of a problem getting worse.

We recognise Early Help as an **approach, not a specific service**, which relies on local agencies working effectively together with families at the earliest opportunity ensuring that **‘the right support, at the right time from the right people’**.

Every professional working with or engaging with children and families, regardless of organisation has a responsibility to deliver Early Help and support families to access the right services at the earliest opportunity. Our Early Help offer promoted that all professionals from across the partnership will identify emerging concerns and potential unmet needs for individual children and families, irrespective of whether they are providing services to children or adults.

Our effective Early Help model is one of collaboration and brings together families, communities, professionals, and systems to work together in a joined up co-ordinated approach, to develop a shared understanding and prevent further problems arising in the future. We aim to provide effective, proportionate, and high-quality Early Help to those children, young people, and families at the right time.



Martin Kelly,
Corporate Director
of Children’s Services,
City of York Council



Catherine Clarke,
Assistant Chief
Constable, North
Yorkshire Police



Michelle Carrington,
Director for Quality and
Nursing, Humber and
North Yorkshire Health
and Care Partnership

City of York Early Help vision

The CYSCP Early Help Strategy sets out our collective vision and responses to how Early Help is delivered within the City of York:

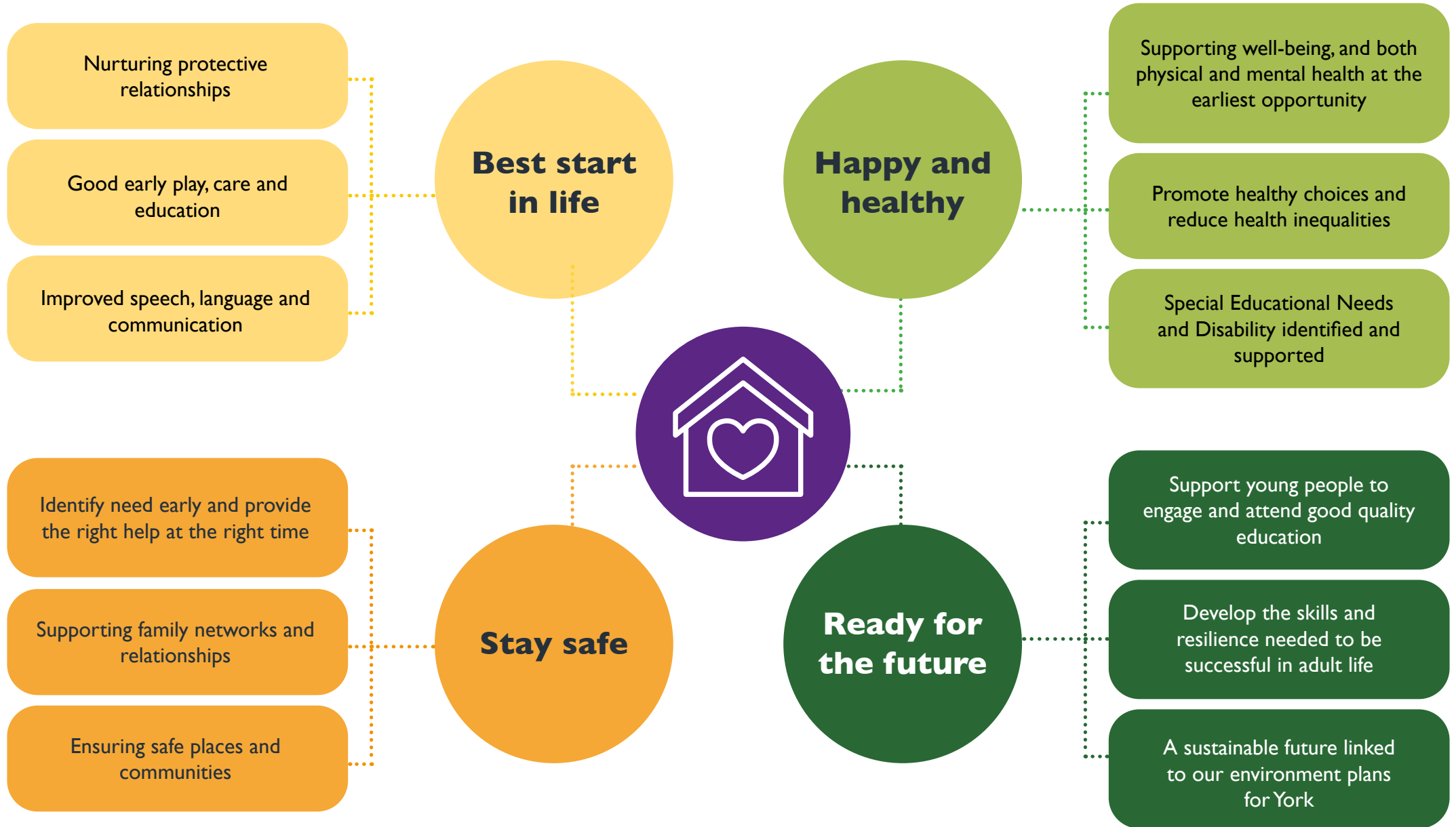
‘Early Help is a collaborative approach where we recognise families do best when they are supported by those who already know them and can assess and provide early intervention at the earliest stage’

The Early Help Strategy is underpinned by the [City of York Children and Young People’s Plan](#). This plan provides a city-wide strategic framework for all partners on how we work together with children, young people, families and communities. At its heart the vision of the plan is that:

‘All Children and Young People get the best start in life, are happy and healthy and develop the skills and relationships they need to thrive into adulthood’



Our shared priorities



Our shared ambitions over the next three years

It is important that our ambitions reflect the joint priorities and developments of all partners and stakeholders. Our shared ambitions are as follows:

- Children and their families receive the right help at the earliest opportunity by the right person.
- Build on a robust, graduated response to children and families within the City of York by all agencies recognising their role in delivering Early Help.
- Capture and understand the voice of the child and family including their lived experience to inform planning.
- Support practitioners in delivering Early Help within each agency.
- Use plain language in a format which is understandable to all those who access it.



What do our families tell us about the importance of Early Help?

“My worker was so amazing with the session she showed me a lot of new topics around parenting. She was prompt at our meetings. She has a high sense of emotional intelligence. Many a time, she helped to communicate with other professionals in the sense that I could listen and relate better with her”

“Thank you so much for all the information & emails & calls you’ve done. I think you’ve helped me the most over the years just in these last 2 days”

“Early help is going well and is helping us to support him to be safer online and develop morning routines.”

- Parent of a Year 2 child

“I really appreciate the support you have given to us, you almost made me cry with your lovely words about me (not sure how I held it in). You have been such an incredible help through what was when I met you, prob some of the hardest times I’ve been through. Future families you work with will be lucky to have you on their side.”

“Early help has allowed my child to get the support they need. We are very grateful.”

- Parent of a Year 10 child

“I have felt supported with the process of Early help, which signposted me to other support services I didn't know existed.”

- Parent of Year 1 child

“I feel supported and listened to.”

- Parent of Year 9 child

“I am very thankful for the Early Help process. My child is now attending school.”

- Parent of a Year 2 child

“The meetings held at school were friendly and nurturing but with definite and clear actions at the end of each session.’ ‘It was made clear that the overall aim was to improve the attendance of the children, but the family were supported for any needs or issues that arose during meetings.”

Why do we need Early Help?

Early Help is focused on prevention, early intervention, and the provision of support for families to improve outcomes to prevent situations escalating which require statutory intervention.

Early help is not a service but a way of thinking and working. Early Help is available to every child and family, either through informal or formal routes depending on the level of need. As soon as a need is identified, at its earliest stage, early help should be provided either through a conversation, action, or intervention to address the need by someone who has or can develop a trusted relationship with the child and or family.

Early help can be provided through a single or a multi-agency response as appropriate to the needs of the child and family and the challenges they are experiencing. Early Help is a collaborative approach between services with families that provides support as soon as a need is identified.

Examples of early help at the earliest level can be described as:

School Attendance is generally good however, there may be moments where the child is absent which requires conversations with parent/carer to understand barriers to make learning and attendance more accessible.

Parent/Carer has limited access to community resources, which could include poverty and social isolation. Require support from an agency to link into community resources and build confidence in this area.



When families require additional targeted support, where children and families may have multiple or complex needs, or whose circumstances might make them more vulnerable they may require a multi-agency coordinated response. This intervention can be led by any professional, including the Targeted Intervention Service (City of York), and requires a targeted co-ordinated response by all agencies.

Examples of these situations could include:

- With support and adaptations, children continue not to attend health appointments or follow advice and treatment for life threatening or life limiting conditions, and requires multiple professionals to support to ensure their health needs are met.
- Parental conflict occurring, where disagreements are not easily resolvable. Concerns that child could be replicating behaviors seen at home, and finds it difficult to cope with anger, frustration and upset.

Early Help is vital in supporting children and families to fulfil their full potential and delivering better outcomes for them and their families. By providing the right support at the right time, practitioners providing support under the Early Help umbrella are working towards address needs and worries preventing them from escalating.



Levels of need and response

All children, young people and families access a range of universal services, including maternity and health visiting services in early years, education, leisure facilities, GPs and services provided by voluntary organisations.

Some families have needs which will require additional support to enable them to reach their full potential. These needs may change throughout a child's life, needs which might require limited support or intensive support depending on their circumstances. The City of York Safeguarding Children Partnership has revised guidance to provide a more aligned multi-agency framework for assessing and responding to the needs of and risks to children.

The threshold document (level of needs) is a guide and a starting point to assist practitioners to come to a common understanding. It allows practitioners to identify levels of need and risk using indicators related to outcomes. It also supports practitioners in determining how their service can best support and work alongside children.



Continuum of need

Level one – universal need

The majority of children will have their needs met by a single agency response including: GP's, pharmacies, schools, libraries, health visitors, sport clubs.

Level two – emerging need

Some children and families have emerging needs. Intervention is provided by a single agency or a co-ordinated response by multiple agencies. Consider Early Help Assessment delivered by lead practitioner.

Level three – family help

Children with increased vulnerability and additional needs which require an Early Help Assessment, a multi agency response. Intervention to be provided via Team around the Family or Targeted Intervention

Level four – specialist need

Children and young people whose needs are increasingly complex and require specialist support through Section 17 social work led, Section 47 child protection and children in our care interventions.

Multi-agency partnership working supports children at all levels

A universal offer that supports families when needed

We want all children to get the best start in life. Our universal services start by supporting all families from before the birth of the child and are in place to support early identification of needs and issues.

When needs and issues are identified by universal services, this service will initiate a conversation with the family or young person to understand their support needs and then either: provide/signpost to appropriate support on a single agency basis, or where the support needs would indicate the need for multi-agency involvement the person identifying the needs/issues should complete a whole family early help assessment using the partnership agreed assessment tool and co-ordinate a team around the child and family.

The assessment should be shared with other agencies involved, and a plan developed to provide the identified support. The family/young person may request that another service supports ongoing coordination of early help support and family wishes and preferences are paramount.

This should be discussed and explored once the assessment has been completed and the appropriate team around the child and family has been identified in collaboration with the family.

A child and family support service that provides a targeted response within a Team around the child and family

Where needs are escalating consideration should be given to seeking advice from your Safeguarding Lead and Supporting Families contact to explore how best to meet unmet need within the agencies already supporting the child and family. Targeted Intervention Services support children and families who require a coordinated response to their needs, and an involvement of a Lead Practitioner.

Targeted Intervention Services will work as part of a 'team around the child and family' and will provide outreach support in the home. Interventions will typically last 6 weeks to 12 weeks of intensive support to the child and family.



City of York Early Help delivery

Power of language

We recognise the importance and power of language when communicating with children, families, and between different agencies. The language professionals often use if full of jargon and acronyms, this language can be difficult for children, families, and professionals outside an agency to understand.

Successful Early Help requires using plain language, which is understandable to all. By recognising how incorrect use of language can be disempowering to families who are the experts in their own experience, we will use language that is plain and understandable to all, creating a culture of working with families instead of doing to.

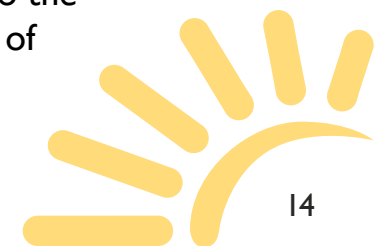
We want to provide support that responds to the needs of the whole family. Support will recognise the strengths of families and work alongside them to build resilience. Children and families will be engaged at every stage and their experiences will help shape and improve services.

Family networks and networks as experts

Our approach is to work in partnership with families who are central within their assessments and planning. Practitioners focus on engaging networks of family members and other important adults to promote the safety, healthy development and healing of children and young people. Focusing on networks as experts in their own experience empowers families to ensure safety and wellbeing for life, decreasing families dependence on services and promotes family decision making.

A strong community and network offer that builds resilience

There is emphasis on supporting families, building resilient communities, recognising that local people are best placed to understand and find solutions to the particular needs of their communities. This approach also means creating a wide-reaching Early Help network within communities which will involve working with those people who are already supported by services to connect them to their communities. As a collective we promote early help for vulnerable families through the Local Offer, co-design of Family Hubs, linked to the Supporting Families agenda to meet the needs of local communities.

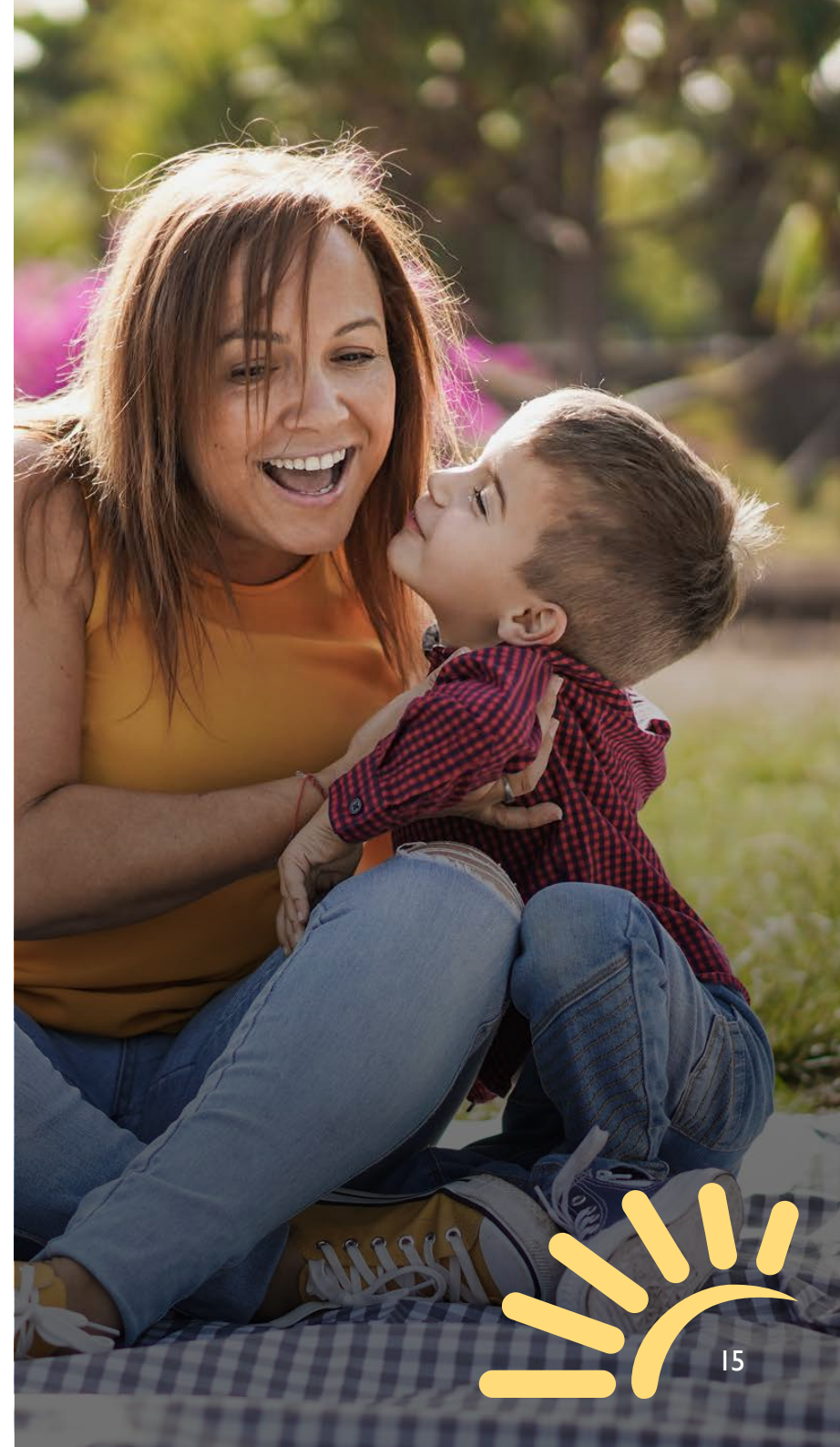


Joining up how we work

We want families to access support once. Should families move through the system, that transitions are seamless, without families having to repeat their story to multiple practitioners. All agencies having a shared understanding of Early Help, being confident in the delivery of Early Help and knowing where to go for further support are all necessary in creating this seamless experience for families.

Clear pathways to support

We want all families to have easy access to support when it is needed. We will clearly explain the support available and make it easy for families to contact services and professionals themselves. We aim to deliver a consistent, holistic approach by joining up support across the age range.



Measurements for success

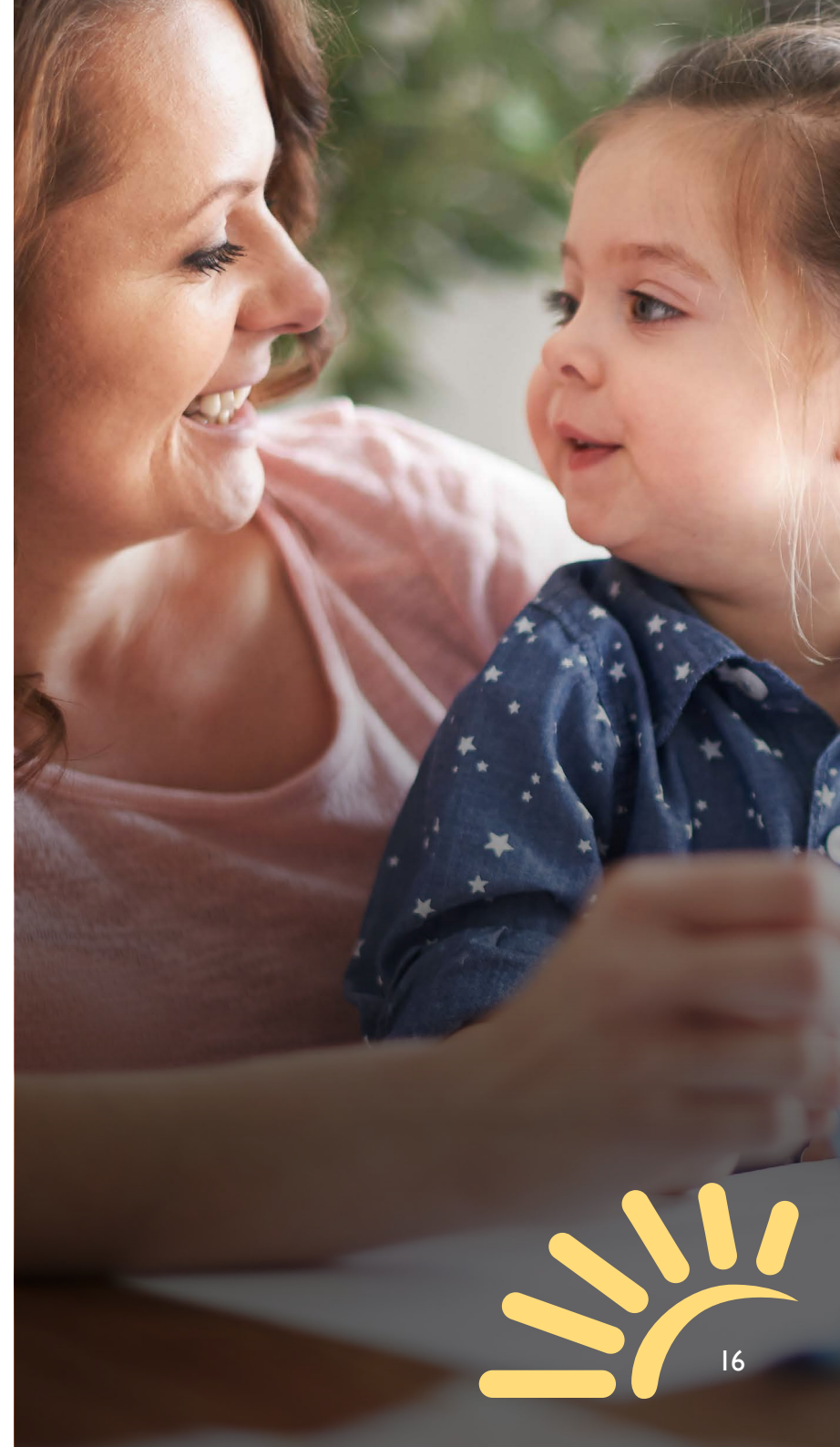
We will measure our successes against the Children and Young People's plan priorities, as below;

Best start in life

- Families have increased knowledge of the services in their area and how to access this support
- Where the outcome of a contact to MASH and the outcome is partner led Early Help Assessment or intervention, this is completed and effective. Measured through dip samples
- Less families requiring statutory involvement
- Increase in the number of families supported through multi-agency whole family early help plans
- Families accessing Raise York (Family Hubs)

Stay Safe

- Increase in the number of partner led Early Help Assessments.
- Number of families making progress against the goals in their Early Help plan understood through dip samples and quality assurance of Early Help plans.
- Families networks are recognised and included within planning and support.

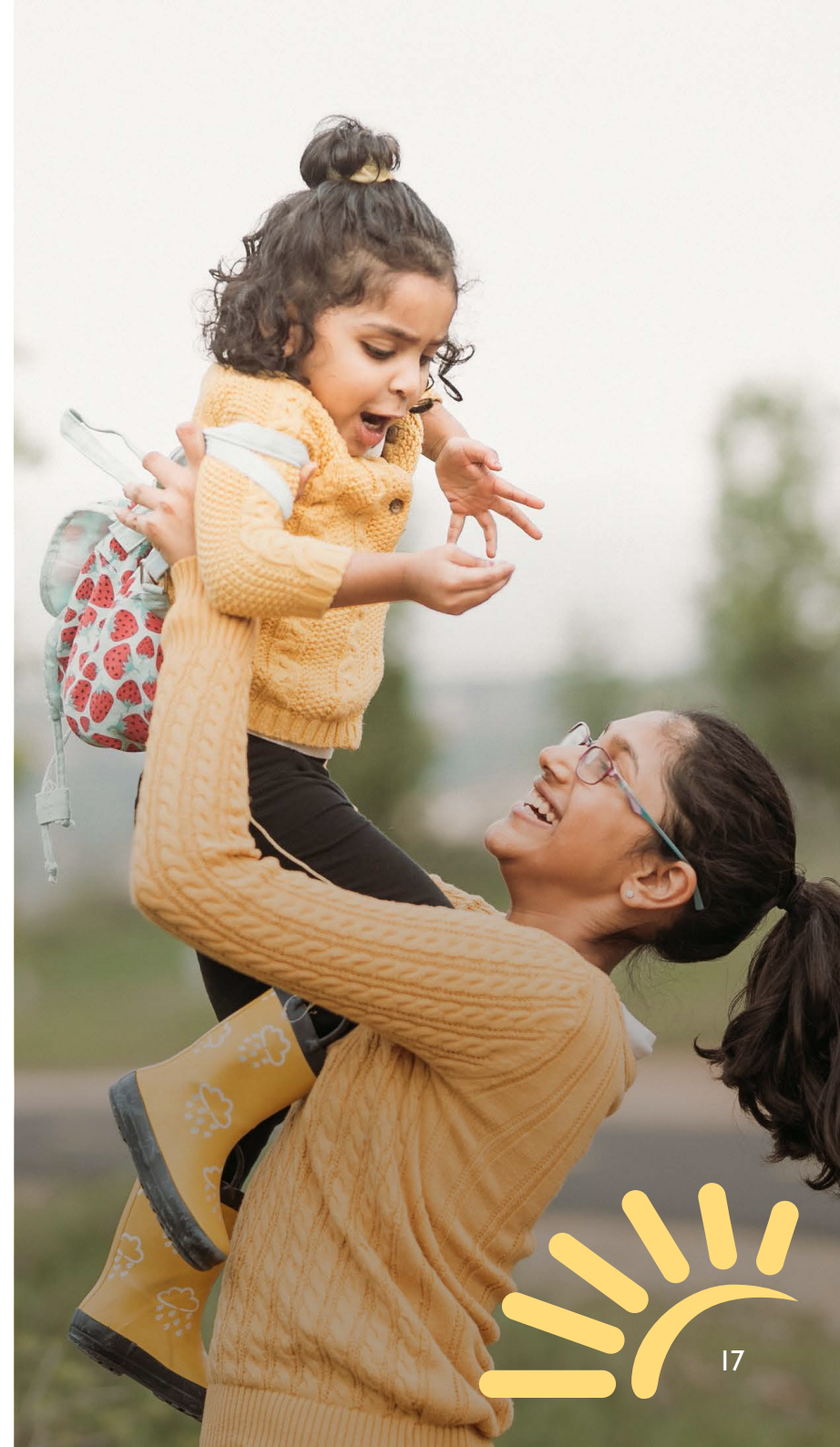


Happy and Healthy

- Improvement in general health and wellbeing for children.
- Improvement in early years readiness
- School attendance
- Reduction of contacts requesting a service from the Targeted Intervention Team, ensuring families are supported by those who already know them and can provide early intervention at the earliest opportunity.

Ready for the future

- Number of families who are satisfied with the support they receive, received through feedback during and after interventions.
- Collaborative approach in delivering Early Help, including collaborative ownership of Early Help and responsibility to ensure its effective and consistent delivery for all children and families.
- Strength in relationships between Early Help partners is reported in reviews, where communication is effective, offering challenge where appropriate and celebrating successes.
- Confirming the use of shared language is common place: not using jargon and acronyms that are not understandable to children or families.
- There is evidence of a confident workforce who feel able and supported to deliver Early Help.



Governance

The Early Help Steering Group will bring together key partners to find solutions to areas that need further development in York. This strategy and associated plan will be monitored via a multi-agency partnership steering group which will report directly into the CYSCP.

How will we support services in delivering Early Help in York?

Supporting Families

Supporting Families Advisors have been developed to support partners as part of wider work to develop York's Family Hubs Network. Supporting Families Advisors do not directly work with families but provide a contact point for help and advice for partners in the city who are working with children, young people and families at an early help level

If you're completing an early help assessment for a family, or think one might be helpful, you can contact the Supporting Families Team for advice and guidance. The Supporting Families Team can:

- Provide practical advice and guidance to partners about the early help assessment and Team Around the Child & Family process.

- Provide case specific advice and guidance to help you better support or access services for the families you are working with. This includes providing advice in cases where progress has become 'stuck'.
- Let you know if an early help assessment and TACF process is already in place for family and link you in with the lead practitioner

Contact the Supporting Families Team at:

supportingfamilies@york.gov.uk and a member of the team will respond to you; please provide your phone number if you would prefer a call back.

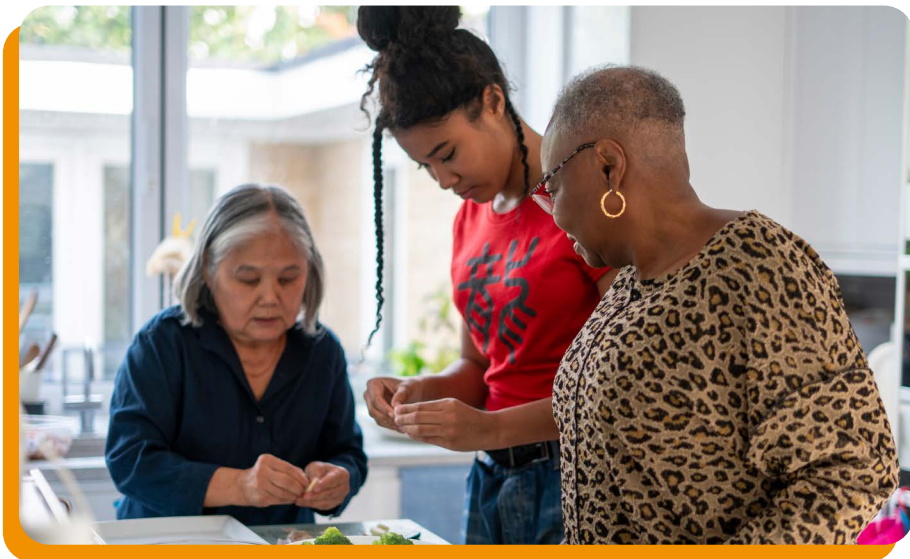


Delivering Early Help?

When you complete an early help assessment for a child and family please contact the Supporting Families team: supportingfamilies@york.gov.uk to register that you are supporting a child and family.

Why do we keep a record of early help assessments?

We maintain a central record of the support a family has received so that we can help understand a family's journey. This means we can link together agencies who might be working with the same family. It also means that if the family is referred to the Targeted Intervention Service or Children's Services, it is clear what support has already been in place and when.



Family Information Service

The York Family Information Service is a free and impartial information service for parents and carers of children and young people aged 0 to 19 (or up to 25 for disabled children).

We can help with anything and everything around family life and being a young person. If you're a parent or carer and have a question but don't know where to go, then please get in touch.

Get in touch by:

Contact Us Form:

www.raiseyork.co.uk/raise-york/get-touch

Telephone: 01904 554444, Monday to Friday 10.00am to 4.00pm

Text telephone: 07786202241

Email: fis@york.gov.uk

Follow us on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#)



Raise York – Your Family Hub Network

Families and communities help to provide a foundation for children and young people to grow, develop and feel safe. Raise York brings together children; young people; families; communities and professionals so everyone can get the connections, help and support they want and need.

Raise York is a network of people, places and online support. It supports children, young people and families from pregnancy to adulthood. You can expect a warm welcome in your local community and to be guided to the right support for you.

The Raise York network is a key component of how our city can come together to deliver the Early Help Strategy. The Raise York partnership have developed tools and information for families and partners.

Information and support for families, including:

- Raise York website
- Family Hubs
- Developing Youth Strategy and Local Youth Partnership
- Information and advice for parents including parent champions
- Parenting support
- Supporting your parenting journey (Start for life)
- Tools, resources and support for professionals
- For more information about Raise York and to find details of local help and support please visit www.raiseyork.co.uk

Following consultation with our partners we know that in order to support Early Help within the City of York the CYSCP have:

- Developed Early Help Practice Guidance
- Developed an Early Help Assessment Framework
- Created an Early Help page on the CYSCP website which includes information about Early Help and what sources of support are available
- Identified Early Help Champions across organisations who you can speak to about further advice
- Reviewed the referral pathway to seek targeted intervention support from the local authority
- Supported partners to carry out the requirements of the supporting families agenda. Further information can be found on the CYSCP Early Help website page.

York SEND Local Offer

The York SEND Local Offer sets out services and activities available to children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities; support is available from birth to 25 years.

Our website provides helpful information for families, and resources for professionals working in SEN services.

SEND website: www.yorksend.org

Email: yorklocalofferSEND@york.gov.uk

MASH

If you have a concern that a child is vulnerable or at risk of significant harm please contact the MASH. The MASH is a multi-agency team made up of representatives from a range of services, including Social Care, Early Help, Police and Health Professionals and is a single point of contact for all concerns about children.

Get in touch by:

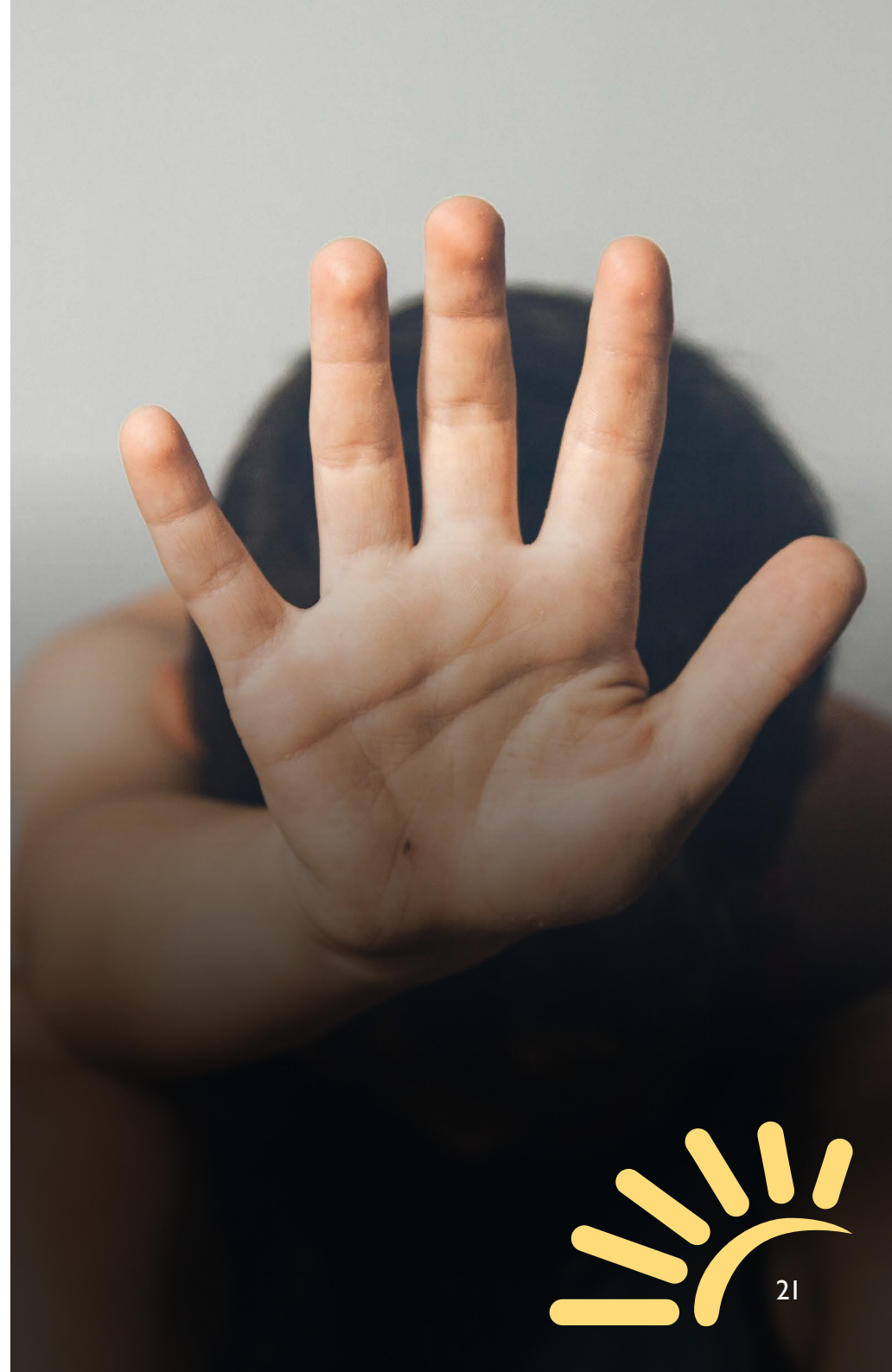
Phone: 01904 551900

Email: MASH@york.gov.uk

Outside office hours, at weekends and on public holidays contact the emergency duty team telephone: 0300 131 2131

If you are a member of the public contacting about your own family or a family you know, you can contact the MASH via the telephone number or email address above.

Further information can be found in the early help practice guidance and the [CYSCP website: Early Help and safeguarding – CYSCP \(saferchildrenyork.org.uk\)](https://www.saferchildrenyork.org.uk)



Glossary of terms

Lead Practitioner: The lead practitioner is the named practitioner who has been identified as the person who will be the family's main point of contact throughout the early help process. A family support worker, school nurse, teacher, health visitor and/or special educational needs coordinator could undertake the lead practitioner role. Where it is felt that it is in the best interests of the child and their family the lead practitioner for Section 17 (Child in Need) does not need to be a qualified Social worker however, they will need direct supervision from a qualified Social Work.

Family Hubs: Provide a single access point to universal and early help services for families with children of all ages (0-19) or up to 25 with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), with a great Start for Life offer at their core. Family Hubs involve co-location of services and professionals to make it easier for families to access the services they need, including Start for Life services, and this can include both physical locations, outreach support and virtual offers

Supporting Families: As part of the wider Supporting Families programme and the development of The RAISE Family Hub Network, the Supporting Families Team can provide help to partner settings around all aspects of early help delivery.

Early Help Assessment: An Early Help Assessment is a form completed in partnership with a family to identify strengths and needs. An Early Help Assessment can help practitioners to identify what a family would like to change and to develop an action plan.

Early Help Conversations: An Early Help intervention that has not required an assessment due to single agency signposting and briefer intervention being sufficient.

Team Around the Child and Family: Brings together children, young people, parents, and practitioners. The parent or carer and, where appropriate, the child or young person should always attend the meeting puts in place a coordinated approach to support the individual or family's needs make sure everyone has an equal role in agreeing goals and actions needed to meet them recognises and acknowledges the needs of parents and carers and their role in meeting the needs of the child or young person.

Targeted Intervention: Service delivered by Local Authority, where family's needs are assessed as "complex" requiring further support and intervention as per the Threshold Document. Child and Family Support Practitioners will deliver support underpinned by an early help assessment and identified plan. They will work as part of a 'team around the child and family' and will provide outreach support in the home. Interventions will typically last 6 weeks to 12 weeks of intensive support to the child and family, accessed via referral to MASH.


MASH: Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) work collaboratively in screening contacts made to City of York Children and Families Service, deciding on what action to take to safeguard and support children and young people across City of York. Multi Agency team comprising of Children’s Social Care, Healthy Child Service and North Yorkshire Police. All contacts will be screened, using the Signs of Safety approach and a decision made within one working day of referral being submitted .

Outcomes of screening:

- Allocation to Safeguarding Team for Child and Families Assessment
- Allocation to Disabled Children’s Team for Child and Families Assessment
- Allocation to Targeted Intervention
- Allocation to Partner Led Early Help for assessment or conversation to be completed by the referring agency
- Allocation to Healthy Child Team
- Provision of information and advice
- Referrers are notified of the outcome of contact either by the team where the contact has been allocated to or by the MASH screener should the directions be made for information and advice



If you would like this document in an alternative format, please contact:

 (01904) 551550

 ycc@york.gov.uk

 @CityofYork

 @cityofyork

It is available in the following languages:

我們也用您們的語言提供這個信息 (Cantonese)

এই তথ্য আপনার নিজের ভাষায় দেয়া যেতে পারে। (Bengali)

Ta informacja może być dostarczona w twoim własnym języku. (Polish)

Bu bilgiyi kendi dilinizde almanız mümkündür. (Turkish)

یہ معلومات آپ کی اپنی زبان (بولی) میں بھی مہیا کی جاسکتی ہیں۔ (Urdu)

Publication date: September 2024

For further information: West Offices, Station Rise, York YO1 6GA

City of York
Safeguarding Children Partnership

