

Continuum of Need

Partners working together to ensure children and their families receive the right help at the right time.

Live from October 2026



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Introduction

In the City of York our shared vision 'is for all children to get the best start in life, be happy and healthy, stay safe and develop the skills and relationships they need to thrive into adulthood.' (Children and Young People's Plan).

We know that the majority of children, young people and their families can be and should be supported through a range of universal services, however some children and their families have needs which will require additional support to enable them to reach their full potential.

This document has been updated by the City of York Children Safeguarding Partnership in line with the Families First Programme. The aim of Families First is to ensure that every family can access the right help and support when they need it with a strong emphasis on early intervention to prevent crisis, this supports our vision within the City of York.

This document sets out family support and what intervention may be needed to support children and their families, while ensuring children are protected from abuse or neglect.



Working together to safeguard children

'a shared responsibility'

It is important everyone is clear about their roles and responsibilities, we know that successful outcomes for children and their families depend on strong partnership working with families and practitioners where we are taking a child centered approach to working with the whole family.

The Children's Social Care National Framework and **Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026)** should be read alongside **Families First Guidance** by all partners given the first enabler is: 'multi-agency working is prioritised and effective' to drive the overarching four outcomes:

1**Outcome one:**

Children, young people and their families stay together and get the help they need

2**Outcome two:**

Children and young people are safe in and outside of their homes

3**Outcome three:**

Children and young people are supported by their family network

4**Outcome four:**

Children in care and care leavers have stable, loving homes

In the City of York this is supported through our own Practice Model which is outlined in our **Local Protocol for Assessment** and supported by our key principles (see page 5).

Every conversation and decision in York...

Starts with
the child

Considers the
long-term impact
of every decision

Ensures we develop resilient lifelong
foundations for children through
secure local family networks

Asks is it good enough
for my child or family

Building Brighter Futures Practice Framework

 Systemic practice	We build trusting relationships with children and their families, focusing on the whole family system. Everyone is unique in their experiences and an expert in their own situation. We work to understand each person within their context, their relationships and community. We challenge ourselves to understand what makes someone who they are and how we can best support them. We are committed to anti-racist, anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive practice.
 Family Group decision making	We believe that every child has a family and a community who they should be connected to. We promote belonging, knowing that families and communities often have the best solutions to their challenges. Relationships are the foundation of resilience. We will see the family, engage them and their networks at the earliest opportunity, identify those important people in the child's life and work to build lifelong relationships.
 Signs of Safety	We work with children, their families and everyone naturally connected to them to understand well-being, risk and safety. We build on strengths and successes and support families and their network to develop plans for lasting safety and wellbeing before we offer or impose ours. We keep children and young people at the centre of our work through understanding their lived experience, wishes and feelings. We use shared straight forward language focusing on 'What are we worried about?' 'What's working well?' 'What needs to happen?' to create long-lasting change over a child's lifetime.
 Safe and together	We will work to promote the well-being of children through understanding the impact of domestic abuse, partnering with survivors to support them alongside intervening and engaging with those who cause harm to reduce risk.

Our meaningful measures



Stay home



Come home



Safe and connected

Early conversations

We know the needs of children and young people are often varied, needs do not fit neatly into little boxes and practitioners will need to seek support and advice. While practitioners should refer to safeguarding procedures they should speak with their designated safeguarding lead/team. **Early Help Consultants** can also offer guidance (more details on page 14).

Early conversations with children, family and their network will help to pull out the factors, the extent of harm and understand the balance of risk and protective factors in a child's life and determine the next steps.

Continuum of need

City of York have developed a Continuum of Need with some features we might see in families across the continuum. It is important to recognise that this tool should be used as a guide and does not represent a fixed definition or checklist to be used to access designated support for children and families.

Professionals should use this guide alongside professional knowledge and understanding, taking a holistic view of the child or young person, their lived experience, and the safety and protective factors around them.



Continuum of need

Putting Families First by building on strengths and providing the right help at the right time to achieve meaningful outcomes that matter to families.



Universal For all children and families, including children with low level needs. Examples of support: • Schools and early years settings • GPs and health services • Community and voluntary groups • Libraries, leisure and sport • Online and digital resources • Best Start Family Hubs • York Family Information Service	Early help Children and families have support needs that can be met through a single or multi-agency co-ordinated community response. The Early Help Assessment and Plan tool (Our Family Support Needs and Plan) will be completed and may need to be co-ordinated by the lead worker: Key features: • Family voice and choice • Strengths-based • Lead worker coordinates support • Early intervention • Working together	Family help Children and families whose needs are multiple and/or complex and require a multi-agency response through targeted early help, child in need or child protection. Key features: • Multi-agency team around the family • Coordinated support • Clear plan and goals • Regular reviews • Improving outcomes and reducing risk	Multi-agency child protection Specialist multi-agency response to protect a child or young person led by a Lead Child Protection Practitioner. Key features: • Statutory assessment • Specialist intervention • Safety is paramount

Stay home

Come home

Safe and connected

Universal

All children and young people will receive support through universal services which include GPs, health services, community and voluntary groups, libraries, leisure and sports clubs, education settings, pharmacies and Best Start Family Hubs.

The majority of these children and young people achieve their full potential through accessing universal provision without need for further support.

Children and young people in this level may have needs but these can be met by universal services through additional, advice, guidance and/or support.

Some examples may include supporting a child to have:

- Parents who feel empowered and able to meet developmental milestones
- Good school attendance
- Good access to community resources meet the needs of their children
- Positive friendships and connections

Early help

There are some families where needs are identified and support above what can be offered by universal services is required. These children and young people are at risk of not reaching their full potential without the provision of additional interventions, and this intervention is provided from a single agency or via a coordinated community response. In York workers use the Early Help Assessment and Plan Tool to work with families to understand their needs and identify the right support. When needs arise due to a child having additional needs or being disabled, make use of York's Local Offer for SEND (yorksend.org).

Examples where Early Help is recommended:

- Parent/Carer has low self-esteem and is isolated and requires support to link into community resources to build confidence.
- Concerns about a child's school attendance and behaviours at home (e.g. angry, withdrawn, upset) and needs exploring with the family.
- Child is not attending scheduled health appointments and there are worries about a child's hygiene. It is not clear what's happening and this needs to be explored.
- Parent/Carer struggling with low mood and has shared relationships at home are strained and the parent/carer is concerned they cannot cope. This needs exploring.

Family help

Family Help is for children, young people and families whose needs are multiple and/or complex and their circumstances make them more vulnerable. These are children and young people whose needs are increasingly complex and require specialist support through targeted early help and Child in Need (Section 17). A child in need is defined under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 as a child who is unlikely to achieve or maintain a reasonable level of health or development, or whose health and development is likely to be significantly or further impaired, without the provision of services; or a child who is disabled.

Their needs should be understood through identifying the right Family Help Lead Practitioner who undertakes an assessment and co-ordinates multi-agency partners to create a coproduced plan of support around the family and their network.

The Family Help Lead Practitioner will work alongside partner agencies such as a school, health, police and other relevant specialist services such as drug and alcohol support, domestic abuse and mental health. The Family Help Lead Practitioner and Family Help Lead Practitioner - Social Worker and intervention will be undertaken through both Targeted early help or Child In Need. The worker will always be supervised by a qualified social worker.



Examples of Family Help could include:

- Increased concerns regarding child's attendance and behaviour despite parents engagement with parenting programmes and early help involvement over several months.
- Concerns increased risk of exploitation and worries regarding behaviour both in and out of the home.
- Plans in early help have not been effective in reducing risk or reducing conflict in the home and the impact on the child's emotional wellbeing. They are telling professionals regarding incidents of domestic abuse and police are being called out.
- Concerns family is at breaking point, asking child to leave or child has been relocated to another network member, therefore child has presented as homeless.
- Parent or carer has moderate, severe or complex mental or physical health needs or learning disability, which places the child at risk of harm.
- Domestic abuse is taking place within the home.
- Child is privately fostered.
- Children regularly going missing from home, with concerns the child is experiencing sexual or criminal exploitation or involved in county lines
- Child has severe, complex or challenging mental health problems including significant, serious or numerous self harm or suicide/attempts.
- Child has problematic, severe or chronic drug and alcohol misuse
- Poor or overwhelming Care Coordination for a child with Disabilities.
- When complex needs arise due to a child having additional needs or being disabled make use of York's Local Offer for SEND (yorksend.org).

Multi-Agency Child Protection

Child protection - is the set of multi-agency activities and processes that follow a concern that a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm. Under section 47 of the Children Act 1989, the local authority has a duty to make enquiries when this is the case and to take decisive action when needed to protect a child from abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

Section 47 child protection and children in our care interventions. These are children and young people whose needs are increasingly complex, based on a range of needs and depth or at risk or suffering from significant harm.

Acute need also describes children at risk of significant harm under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989, which require further investigation.

Harm can be determined 'significant' by 'comparing a child's health and development with what might be reasonably expected of a similar child'.

Significant harm

Although there is no absolute criteria for determining whether or not harm is 'significant', local authorities such as social services, police, education and health agencies work with family members to assess the child, and a decision is made based on their professional judgement using the gathered evidence.

Children may become subject to child protection enquiries, pre-proceedings or be taken into the care of the local authority or require specialist mental health intervention.

Lead Child Protection Practitioners will work alongside the allocated social worker to undertake investigations under s.47.

To support parents they will be offered a peer advocate.

Significant harm examples could include:

- Children at immediate risk of significant harm including physical, sexual, emotional harm and neglect.
- Children disclosing incidents of abuse (sexual, physical emotional)
- Non independently mobile babies and children with unexplained injuries, suspicious injuries or where there is inconsistent explanation of the injury
- Children from families experiencing a crisis likely to result in an immediate break down of care arrangements
- Where there are serious concerns regarding the risk of significant harm to an unborn baby
- Children who are remanded to Custody
- Concerns in respect of medial neglect despite intervention and support from professionals, where the child is experiencing pain and harm through lack of medical care.



Early help

“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”

Everyone in the City of York who works with children, young people and families, has a responsibility to support the delivery of Early Help and support them in accessing appropriate services’.

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. In order to support our city wide approach to early help and joint working **‘Our Family Support Needs and Plan’** is York’s common early help assessment and plan tool that is used by all partners in their work with families.

Where a child’s needs are due to additional needs or being disabled make use of [York’s Local Offer for SEND](#).



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

Get in touch by:

For more information about Raise York and to find details of local help and support please visit:

raiseyork.co.uk



Raise York
Your Family Hub Network

Family Information Service

A free and impartial information service for all York families, and practitioners who work with families, children and young people, from pregnancy to 19 years (up to 25 years for families who have children with additional needs and disabilities). Information includes:

- Ofsted registered childcare including a brokerage service for families struggling to find childcare to meet their needs.
- Clubs, groups, activities, and things to do for children, young people, and families
- Support services including parenting, emotional health and wellbeing, finance support services and more...

The service operates on an ask anything basis, so no matter what the question, feel free to get in touch and the team will try and help you.

Get in touch by:

Contact Us Form:

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

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

Text telephone: **07786 202241**

Email: fis@york.gov.uk

Follow us on Facebook or Instagram



Raise York
Your Family Hub Network

Early Help Consultation

Early Help Consultants are a dedicated team to support partners as part of wider work to develop York's Family Hubs Network. Early Help consultants do not work directly with families but provide a contact point for help and guide partners in the city who are working with children, young people and families at an early help level. If you're working with a family and would welcome early help guidance, consultants offer:

- Being a point of contact for agencies to discuss families in need of early help support, problem-solving with agencies and signposting to appropriate sources of support.
- Guidance, support and training about the Early Help Assessment and Plan Tool
- Coaching and modelling conversations with families and how best to use of the Tool. Please read Coaching and modelling for professionals to have conversations with families and how to best use the tool
- Advising workers about other agencies who may already, or potentially could, be involved in a Team Around the Child and Family;

- Coaching lead workers in early help practice e.g. holding Team Around the Child and Family meetings;
- Follow-up guidance when there has been a recommendation by MASH that you and your agency/setting offer early help.
- Guidance when early help plans become 'stuck'.
- Links to lead workers already co-ordinating support for families

Get in touch by:

Contact the Early Help consultants at:

Email: earlyhelpconsultants@york.gov.uk

please provide your phone number if you would prefer a call back.



Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

If there are concerns a child is vulnerable or at risk of significant harm, contact should be made with the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) in York. The MASH is a multi-agency team made up of representatives from a range of services, including Social Care, Early Help Targeted Intervention, North Yorkshire Police and Health Professionals.

MASH is a single point of contact for concerns about children, reviewing referrals and making decisions on contacts made to Children's Social Care. This partnership approach will make it easier to get children, young people and families to get the right level of support as quickly as possible.

Following a referral, the MASH team come together to review and share information sent to them. They use their professional judgement and also the threshold document, to enable them to make right decision at the right time for a child.

In order for MASH to efficiently make decision, all relevant information, including parental consent or clear reasons why this has not been obtained, is provided to ensure that the referral can be progressed as effectively as possible.

Get in touch by:

Referrals on situations that are not immediately urgent should be made by completing the MASH referral form
Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub contact information:

Phone: **01904 551900**

Email: **mash@york.gov.uk**

Address:

MASH, West Offices, Station Rise, York, YO1 6GA

Outside office hours, at weekends and on public holidays contact the Emergency Duty Team on telephone: **0300 131 2131**



Multi-Agency Child Protection Team

Family Help and our Multi-agency Child Protection Team are wholly interdependent. Together, they provide wraparound support for families and those who work with them; preventing escalation into crisis; enabling a clear, expert focus on children who need protection from significant harm; and reducing costly and unnecessary statutory intervention in family life where child protection is not needed.

Highly experienced multi-agency child protection teams (MACPTs) with embedded, Lead Child Protection Practitioner (LCPP) social workers will bring an expert focus to child protection decision making.

They will lead all child protection decision-making – from convening and chairing strategy discussions to overseeing the development, delivery, review and closure of child protection plans and informing decisions about moving into preproceedings and the Public Law Outline (PLO) process. These teams will enable a consistent and robust application of the significant harm threshold, acting as a local centre of excellence on child protection issues.

Multi-agency child protection teams will come alongside and support Family Help Lead Practitioners (FHLPs) throughout child protection activity. FHLPs will retain the primary relationship with and overall responsibility for supporting the child and their family. MACPT will work closely with MASH creating a single, cohesive system for protecting children.



Local Authority Designated Officer

allegations against professionals (including foster carers)

The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) works within a local authority to:

- Provide advice and guidance to employers and voluntary organisations
- Liaise with the police and other agencies
- Monitor the progress of cases to ensure that they are dealt with as quickly as possible, consistent with a thorough and fair process

The role of the LADO is to coordinate all allegations and concerns made against a person who works with children within the City of York.

As such, all allegations and concerns must be reported to the LADO. The LADO will maintain a database of all allegations and concerns received and will provide reports to the Partnership at least annually or on request.

The LADO will advise, in discussion with the senior manager within the organisation, on what action should be taken by the employer and whether the matter should be referred to children's social care and the police for a decision on whether to convene a strategy meeting or an initial evaluation meeting.

Contact details:

The City of York Safeguarding Children Partnership have produced a Procedure for Allegations against Childcare Professionals and Volunteers. This guidance deals with allegations against staff, volunteers, foster carers and adopters, it is for employers and organisations responsible for providing services to children and young people.

If you do have concerns and wish to make a referral then please complete the LADO Referral Form.

Completed LADO referral forms must be sent by email to: lado@york.gov.uk



Information sharing and consent

Within the City of York we recognise it is important to work alongside families and all organisations adopt a 'working with' and not 'doing to' approach. The importance of engaging children, young people and families from the outset and of securing their consent to work with the child and family is crucial to ensure long term improved outcomes for children. Consent means that the family is fully informed about the services they are being referred to, agree with the referral being made and understand what information professionals are passing on and why. Refusal to engage with services or refusal to give consent to share information are not in isolation reasons to escalate concerns.

There are some exceptions when there is a need to protect children and young people. For example, if having a conversation with the family would place the child, or another child, or someone else, or you the referrer, at increased risk of suffering harm you do not need consent.

You also don't need consent if it might undermine the investigation of a serious crime or where a delay in getting consent may mean the child or young person is put at further risk of harm.

In circumstances where information is being shared without consent the practitioner should respond in line with safeguarding guidance and or procedures, such as; Children who are at risk of exploitation, fabricated and induced illness (FII), unborn and non-mobile baby protocol.

Refer to [City of York Safeguarding Children Partnership](#) for further information.



Seven golden rules of information sharing

1

Remember that the Data Protection Act 2018 and human rights law are not barriers to justified information sharing, but provide a framework to ensure that personal information about living individuals is shared appropriately.

2

Be open and honest with the individual (and/or their family where appropriate) from the outset about why, what, how and with whom information will, or could be shared, and seek their agreement, unless it is unsafe or inappropriate to do so.

3

Seek advice from other practitioners if you are in any doubt about sharing the information concerned, without disclosing the identity of the individual where possible.

4

Share with informed consent where appropriate and, where possible, respect the wishes of those who do not consent to share confidential information. You may still share information without consent if, in your judgement, there is good reason to do so, such as where safety may be at risk. You will need to base your judgement on the facts of the case. When you are sharing or requesting personal information from someone, be certain of the basis upon which you are doing so. Where you have consent, be mindful that an individual might not expect information to be shared.

5

Consider safety and well-being: Make your information sharing decision after considering the safety and well-being of the individual and others who may be affected by their actions.

6

Necessary, proportionate, relevant, adequate, accurate, timely and secure: Ensure that the information you share is necessary for the purpose for which you are sharing it, is shared only with those individuals who need to have it, is accurate and up-to-date, is shared in a timely fashion, and is shared securely (see principles).

7

Keep a record of your decision and the reasons for it – whether it is to share information or not. If you decide to share, then record what you have shared, with whom and for what purpose.

In the City of York we aim to promote a culture of partnership working, and our agreed Families First principles are:

- A system that never gives up on a child
- We treat everyone with kindness, dignity and care
- We have a collective commitment to be families led
- We promote partnerships and respectful relationships
- Real honesty to get through professional disagreements

As a partnership we are keen to foster a culture of conversation that aims to promote healthy, collaborative relationships between practitioners. We know that when we have strong partnerships between professionals and with families' outcomes for children are better.

These conversations should take place as soon as possible with the aim of achieving a shared understanding and resolving any differences at the earliest opportunity.

Successful outcomes for children depend on strong partnership working between parents/carers and the practitioners working with them (Working Together 2026).



Effective working together relies on good information sharing resolving disagreements to the satisfaction of workers and agencies, and a belief in a genuine partnership and joint working to safeguard children.

Decisions should be reached together through constructive conversation however, at times there may be disagreement. If this is the case*:

Stage 1: Practitioner to Practitioner

- Discuss the concern directly with the relevant practitioner
- Aim to resolve informally and promptly
- Record the discussion and outcome

Stage 2: Line Manager

- If unresolved, escalate to your line manager/supervisor in 1 working day.
- Managers should liaise with their counterpart in the other agency.
- Agree actions (e.g. interim safety measures) and timescales; record the decision. Resolve in 5 working days.



***N.B. Escalation must never delay urgent protective action. In situations where rapid decisions are required between agencies to ensure a child's immediate safety, line managers should escalate to senior leaders without delay to support timely and effective safety planning. Escalation must not delay urgent protective action. Please refer to the [partnership website](#) for further information.**



Stage 3: Senior Manager to Senior Manager Conversation

- If unresolved, escalate to senior managers.
- A multi-agency discussion should take place between the statutory safeguarding leads of the partnership and relevant professionals involved with the family, (where appropriate) to resolve
- Agree actions and timescales; record the decision. Resolve in 5 working days.

Stage 4: Partnership Escalation

- If concerns remain unresolved or are systemic, senior management should refer to the Safeguarding Partnership via the business unit CYSCP@york.gov.uk
- Include a synopsis/written record of effort made to resolve the matter.
- The Partnership Executive may seek further information and will make recommendations to agencies for the resolution of the matters within 15 working days of the issue being brought to their attention.
- The Safeguarding Partnership expects that the recommendations will be acted upon.

For further information regarding the Multi-Agency Escalation Practice Guidance please visit the City of York Safeguarding Children Partnership website.



Alternative formats

To ask for reasonable adjustments or this document in an alternative language or format such as large print, braille, audio, Easy Read or BSL you can:

Email us at: cycaccessteam@york.gov.uk

Call us: **01904 551550** and customer services will pass your request onto the Access Team.

Use our BSL Video Relay Service:

www.york.gov.uk/BSLInterpretingService

Select 'Switchboard' from the menu.

We can also translate into 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)