

Staffordshire's Early Help Strategy 2022 - 2027

right
help 

right
time 

right
place 

Staffordshire Families
Strategic Partnership



STAFFORDSHIRE COMMISSIONER
Police | Fire and Rescue | Crime





Foreword

As the chair of the Families Strategic Partnership Board, it is a privilege to introduce this strategy.

Firstly, I would like to thank all the children, young people, families, and partners who helped us get to this point.

Your voice was heard, and we will continue to work with you to help and support you, when you tell us you need us. We were extremely pleased to hear where we had got this right for so many families already. We want to get even better as too many of you told us that COVID had adversely impacted on you, your lives, and the way in which we worked with you to meet your needs.

What was clear is that you want us to provide the right help, in the right place, at the right time and sometimes we could do this earlier and in a more seamless way, wrapping the support around you, in a more co-ordinated way.

This strategy shares our commitment, our values, the outcomes we are seeking to achieve and the way in which we will work with you so that we all have a common understanding of where we are trying to get to and how we will work with you to achieve this.

What we now need is everyone's collective action to help us make a real difference for every child, young person and family who is looking for help and support in Staffordshire. Building trusting relationships in a joined-up way to help you and your family with your changing needs.

I am confident that we can do this together. Early Help is critically important to our partnership, it was the priority that united us, as we all want to help and support children, young people, and families as early as we can so that you have a better life.

Neelam Bhardwaja

Director for Children and Families Services and
Chair of Staffordshire's Families Strategic Partnership Board.

Our Commitment

"We will provide children and families with the support they need at the earliest opportunity by the people who are best placed to help."

"We will be inclusive, positive and build trusting relationships with families. We will work with families to put what they need first, as listening to families is at the heart of what we do."

Governance

Our commitment and the delivery of our strategy will be led by the Early Help & Placed Based Approach Partnership. They will bring this to life and make it the centre of what they do. They will be held accountable by the Family Strategic Partnership Board who are a sub-group of the Health and Wellbeing Board.



What you have told us

We talked to you about Early Help and you told us you wanted the **RIGHT HELP**, at the **RIGHT TIME** in the **RIGHT PLACE**.



You want us to listen and hear what you and your family are telling us so that we can fully understand what you all need.

You want us to think about the words we use and how we talk with you and your family, as sometimes we put barriers in the way by using words you don't understand.

You want people working with you and your family to talk to one another, so you don't have to keep on repeating the same things time and time again.



You want asking for help to be easy to do, as everyone needs help now and again.

You don't want to be judged when asking for the help you need or telling us about what life is like for you.

You want us to all work together to provide this help earlier, as sometimes this comes too late.



You want to know what support there is.

You want it to be clear and easy to use.

You want to be able to ask when you don't know where to go.

You want us to do this in person sometimes as some things are easier to say in person.

You want this close to where you live and easy to find.

Hearing what you want has helped us to improve our Delivery Plan and shape what our approach to Early Help needs to be.

Early Help means that children get the support needed to reach their full potential and improve their long-term outcomes¹.

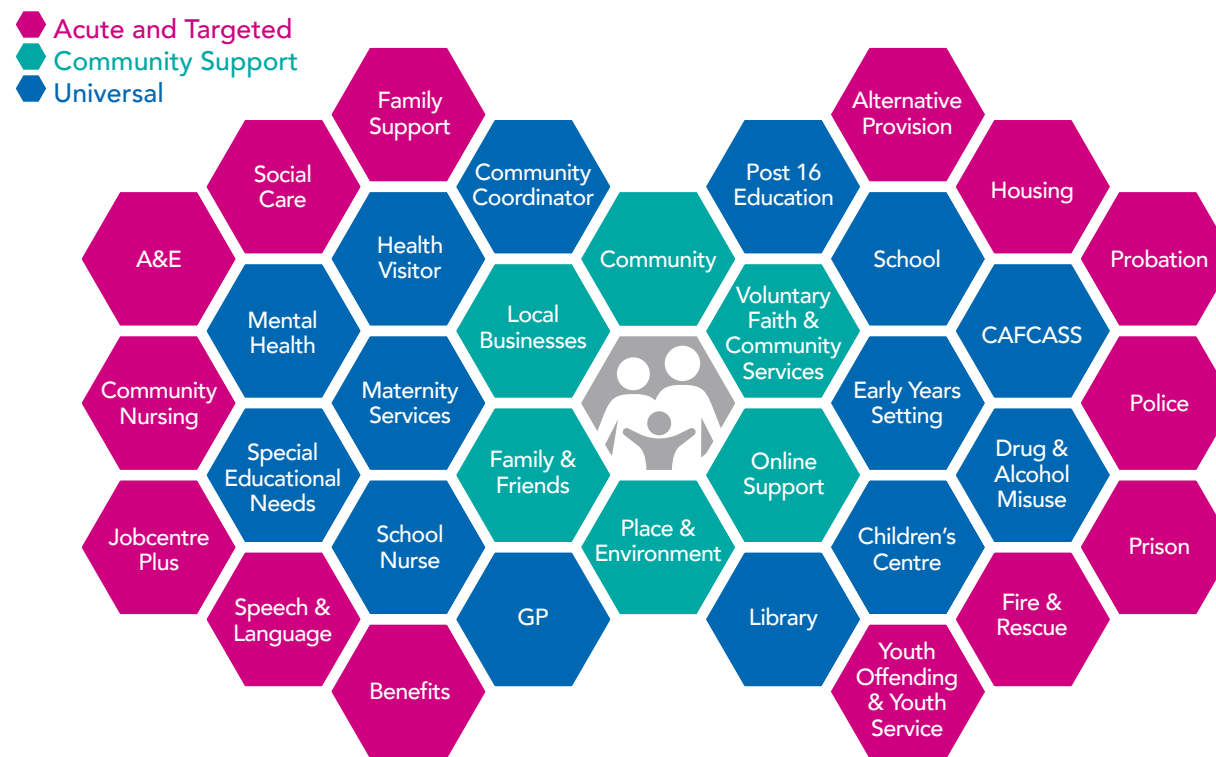
It can improve the quality of a child's home and family life, enable them to perform better at school and support their mental health and development². Early Help can also support a child to develop strengths and skills that can prepare them for adult life.

Early Help can take many forms, such as community advice programmes, school-based programmes, mentoring and peer support schemes, support in the home, home visiting programmes and more. It is about the right level of support for the challenges the family is facing at that time. Early Help is helping those who may not always find it easy to access support but will benefit from getting it and as soon as possible, sometimes before they know they need it.



Our approach to Early Help right help, right time, right place

The Early Help System



Early Help is everyone's responsibility - it is a collaboration and not about an individual service working alone, it relies on everyone working together effectively. It is expected that any worker or volunteer from any agency, provider or service will respond to meet those needs, by working with others to do so.

It recognises that no one is an expert in everything and there is a team of partners available to share information, offer advice, guidance and practical hands-on support to one another, when needed. We engage with communities, the voluntary sector, partners, and universal services to address all needs at the earliest point.

¹ Clarke, A., Morreale, S., Field, C., Hussein, Y. & Barry, M. (2015). What works in enhancing social and emotional skills development during childhood and adolescence? Early Intervention Foundation. www.eif.org.uk/report/what-works-in-enhancingsocial-and-emotional-skills-development-during-childhood-and-adolescence
² Early Intervention Foundation (2021). Spending review 2021: The case for early intervention to support levelling up and Covid recovery. [early-intervention-to-support-levelling-up-and-covid-recovery-1.pdf](https://www.eif.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/early-intervention-to-support-levelling-up-and-covid-recovery-1.pdf)

Our model of Early Help support

A lead person for the family to help coordinate support

A lead worker is dedicated to a family to build an honest and productive relationship. We know that Early Help works best when those who know the family well or speak with them regularly act as the lead worker and the point of contact for the family. The lead worker engages with a range of other agencies to ensure that the support is coordinated and meeting the needs of the children and their families.

Working 'with' the family not doing 'to' or 'for'

Parents, carers, children, and their local community have lots of skills, assets and strengths. To empower families to develop their confidence, knowledge and improve problem solving skills, Early Help partners work 'with' families, rather than doing 'for' or 'to' families. This is known as a strength-based 'restorative approach' that builds the child, parents/carers and family's resilience, so they can achieve better long-term outcomes for children.

Considering the whole family

Early Help will consider the needs of the family as a whole, understanding these are interconnected and doing what works best for the child(ren).

Everyone working to the same family plan

Whilst the family have one main lead worker helping to link them with appropriate support, successful Early Help requires a partnership response that needs bringing together into one plan. It can be difficult for the family if they are working with more than one agency, the family may experience lots of people wanting them to do things at the same time. Having one plan with coordinated support is easier for the family to work with, as it makes sure they do not have to deal with these competing demands. To help manage effective multi-agency support, 'Team Around the Family', or 'Restorative Circle' meetings can bring all the services involved together to coordinate support.

Delivering hands on practical support

The actions planned together need to consider what practical support may be required, such as how to do something, not presume everyone already knows how to do something. This might be how to work out a morning routine to get the children to school on time, guidance and reassurance for a parent learning a new technique like breast feeding, changing a nappy, how to get from point a to b using public transport or how to do a household budget, for example.



Early Help in action | Case studies



As part of routine contact by the Health Visitor, additional support needs were identified for a 20-month-old child's speech and language development.

A referral was made to the Speech Therapist. By considering the whole family, the Health Visitor was able to identify the older sibling had experienced similar development difficulties, so made a referral to the Early Years Forum for wider development support. The Health Visitor had got to know the whole family and identified Grandma was a good source of support for Mum and Dad. This meant Grandma was able to help with managing childcare, allowing Dad to take the child to the speech and language appointments with Mum.



A young man was regularly missing school and getting into trouble when he did attend.

His situation worsened when he connected with a peer group engaging in anti-social behaviour within the local community.

A local youth charity reached out to the young man and got him involved in their after-school football club, which he attended regularly. His attitude and behaviour improved and in recognition of this, he was given coaching responsibility. This coaching role improved his confidence and self-esteem. After three years, this young man is a part time coach and working full time. He is kind, respectful and a great role model to other young people.

A 12-year-old girl visited the school nurse to discuss internet safety and concerns about her own emotional wellbeing.

The girl talked about her distress and self-harm; the nurse noticed that she was having difficulty understanding and processing information. Talking with her parent later, they confirmed that their daughter had a diagnosis of dyslexia and they had been trying to reach out for support unsuccessfully. The school nurse was able to bring in additional emotional support and help with speech and language.

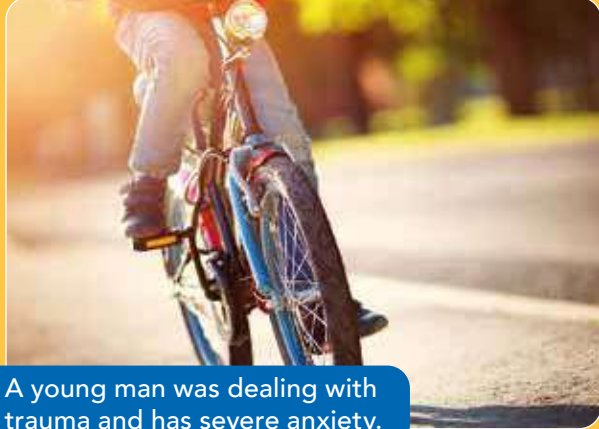


Police were concerned about anti-social behaviour involving young people.

The Police contacted the Vulnerability Partnership who were able to link local Youth Workers to the site at times the anti-social behaviour was taking place.

This allowed local young people to be positively engaged, listened to and appropriate support to be in place with the help of the school partnership.

Early Help in action | Case studies



A young man was dealing with trauma and has severe anxiety.

A voluntary, charity group reached out to the young man and his parent to offer support. Mum welcomed their help and shared her belief that her son has mild autism, also that she struggles to cope with his behaviour and is concerned about his lack of socialising.

The group felt the young man would benefit from holding some responsibility; tasks that would empower but not overwhelm him. He was asked to take some photos for the charity's website, he excelled and was recognised for his achievement.

The young man receives ongoing counselling support from the group and continues to be responsible for their photography. Through the group's contacts with other agencies, a bike was donated to the young man, encouraging him to socialise with his friends.

The young man's behaviour, concentration, and his relationship with his family has improved massively.

Mum and her two young children came to Staffordshire with very limited English language skills and confidence.

It soon became clear that the worries around some of Mum's child supervision were because she had little choice; the family were living in poverty with no support networks or benefits.

After working with a Family Practitioner, Mum has the right benefits in place, they have a safe place to call home and both children are in education. Mum is spending positive time with the children, and they are accessing activities and services in the community together, with the friends they have made. Mum is attending college to study 'English for Speakers of Other Languages' (ESOL) and is very keen to move into work and be a positive role model for her children.



A 15-year-old girl was pregnant and needed support, given her age and previous service involvement.

An Early Help Assessment was completed that also involved the soon to be grandparents and teenage expectant father. A 'Team around the Family' was put in place, bringing in support from the Family Practitioner, midwife, and school.

Working with the family, a plan was put in place to give support to the mum-to-be and wider family. The mum-to-be was able to continue her education and both parents attended 'Bump to Baby' antenatal sessions to prepare them for parenthood. Their baby is now born, and mum is doing exceptionally well with the skills she has learnt. The young parents are working out co-parenting between them with the wider family supporting this.

Making a difference

Staffordshire has a strong partnership successfully delivering much needed Early Help to children and their families, but we know there is more to be done.

We recognise that by working more effectively with each other, and with children and families, outcomes for Staffordshire children and their families can be improved further.

Our Early Help Strategy shares the same outcomes chosen by the Family Strategic Partnership Board and the Health and Wellbeing Board. Our linked measures track and evaluate our contribution to these partnership outcomes.



Outcome 1 Children will be Happy and Healthy if we...

Improve Children and Families' mental health and emotional wellbeing

Encourage communities to be more active and live healthier lifestyles

Reduce avoidable hospital admissions

Improve community networks that promote independence and local resilience

Early Help Measures

Increase in the number of Children attending school taking part in community activities - building their confidence, social skills, and support network

Increase in Family/Parents/Carers feeling better equipped to manage the Child's mental health and well-being

Decrease in the number of Children presenting at hospital with accidental injuries



Outcome 2 Children will Feel Safe and Belong if we...

Support families to stay together

Reduce Infant and Child mortality rates

Improve parenting skills and aspirations

Develop the formal Early Help support that families receive from professionals and improve the informal Earliest Help offer in local communities through partnership working

Early Help Measures

Increase in the number of Families engaged with appropriate support that can be seen to be making a difference

Increase in the numbers of Parents/Carers demonstrate improved, positive parenting

Increase in the number of Children feeling safe at home



Outcome 3 Children will Achieve and Contribute if we...

Focus on giving Children the 'best start in life' and ensure that children are ready for school

Improve educational achievement and raise aspirations at all ages

Connect families to more and better employment opportunities

Early Help Measures

Increase in the number of Children entering school ready to learn

Decrease in the number of households reliant solely on benefits Increase in the number of Children feeling safe at home

Decrease in the number of Children: experiencing criminal or pre-criminal exploitation (e.g., radicalisation), involved in crime or anti-social behaviour, experiencing harm that requires higher level social care service involvement