

27th September 2022

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Early Help Strategy

Ward(s): All

Portfolios: Cllr Tim Wilson. Children's

1. Aim

To provide an overview of Walsall's Early Help partnership, the alignment to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Supporting Families programme 2022 and beyond, the 2021- 2024 Early Help Strategy and the Locality Family Hub model, approach and response to children, young people and their families.

Early Help aims to ensure that vulnerable families who need support get it, at the right time, in the right way and that we continue to deliver locally based support for families, led by key Early Help practitioners and local partners, who know their areas and families best and who work with children, families and carers to build on their strengths and tackle their problems as soon as possible and head on.

Early intervention with the right support should prevent the needs of vulnerable families from escalating and reduce the demand for statutory intervention.

2. Recommendations

1. For the direction of travel for the Early Help Partnership to be supported
2. For progress and achievements to be endorsed

3. Report detail – know

3.1 Early Help Partnership

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) is the statutory guidance for multi-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, young people and their families. The guidance defines Early Help as 'providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child/young person's life from the foundations years through to the teenage years.

Early Help is not the responsibility of one single agency it requires a multi-agency approach. The Walsall's Early Help partnership, is one where all organisations and services working with and for children, young people and their families, including schools, police, health, children's social care, early help localities, housing and the

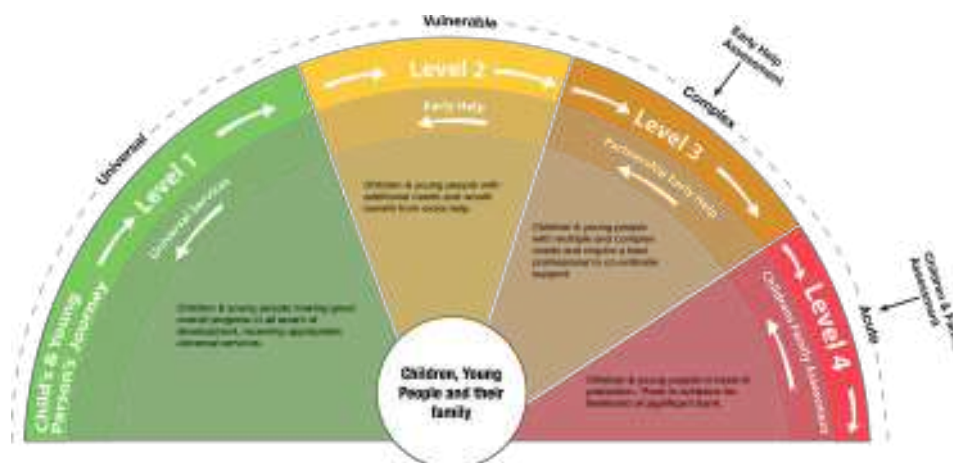
voluntary and community sector work in a collective and coordinated way to not only support families to avoid poor outcomes but to have ambition and to thrive.

Working together in this way, supporting families, providing 'effective whole family support' we know eradicates silo working, prevents children and young people entering the care system and/or escalating into statutory services, increases their chances to have a 'good' life, reduces the likelihood of involvement in crime and helping families into work, helps the whole family to thrive, build resilience and have an ambitious future.

There is an Early Help offer at all levels, partners deliver a range of Early Help interventions from signposting to local universal services, delivering single agency support through to more intensive support targeted at levels of need.

Intervening earlier and providing support is critical in reducing the impact of adversity and reducing the likelihood of problems escalating.

The continuum of need sets out how we can support at various stage of need:



3.2 The Supporting Families Programme 2022 to 2025

The Early Help Partnership is responsible for delivering the Governments Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities Supporting Families programme, launched in March 2021 and builds further on the previous Troubled Families programme which commenced in 2015.

The programme is aimed at providing targeted interventions for families with complex interconnected problems and is directly associated to the delivery of the partnership approach at level 3 within the continuum of need above.

The Supporting Families programme has 10 areas of priority need categories:

1. Education
2. Early Years
3. Health
4. Drugs & Alcohol
5. Family Relationships
6. Abuse & Exploitation
7. Crime Prevention and Tackling Crime
8. Domestic Abuse

- 9. Secure Housing
- 10. Financial Stability

For a family to be supported as part of this programme there has to be evidence of 3 or more needs within the family, this is assessed by the completion of an Early Help Assessment with a follow on ‘team around the family, and agreed family plan of support’.

Supporting families to achieve successful outcome is key, the Department for Levelling Up have refreshed the ‘outcome framework’ due to be launched in October 2022. The framework clearly sets out how the Early Help partnership should be working with families and the evidence of achievement expected for each family against their presenting needs.

Following the recent changes in government guidance the Early Help partnership is reviewing the process, including the assessment, team around the family plan and support, linked to the Early Help Strategy priority one, culture & practice as set out below. The review and changes will be implemented from November 2022.

3.3 Early Help Partnership Strategy 2021-2024

November 2021 the Early Help Partnership launched the 2021-2024 Strategy , in doing so the partnership reflected on the achievements and impact on our families including:

Achievements	Impact
We met with key partners to strengthen locality partnership working based on the needs of children and young people needing Early Help support, such as emotional health & wellbeing, debt, unemployment and housing concerns.	As a result we have co-located partners including school nurses, DWP employment advisors, homeless & housing partners supporting local families within their local community.
We have developed an evidenced based informed parenting offer, a partnership between the local authority, school nursing and teenage parenting service	As a result we now offer a ‘hybrid’ model of delivery, including on-line self-help training, top tips, a range of group work courses based on needs and a bespoke 121 support in the family home. Over 700 families have been helped We worked with the Early Intervention Foundation (EiF) around the evaluation of our parenting offer and, the EiF told us <i>‘the evaluation has showed statistically significant positive impact on parent’s relationships and wellbeing post their attendance at an Early Help Parenting programme ‘</i>
We secured funding from the DWP to help us to understand the impact of parental conflict and consider how to raise the awareness around the importance of Reducing Parental Conflict and enhanced support to families and partners in understanding this further	As a result we have trained over 200 practitioners and partners from Childrens Social Care, School, Police, School Nurses, Health Visitors, Housing & the Voluntary Sector Worked as a partner with EiF to support the Reducing Parental Conflict evaluation measures which have now

	been introduced and published by the EiF. We are taking this work to the next stage, have pulled together a Black Country Consortium for Reducing Parental Conflict and have secured further funding, with Walsall leading on the programme.
We have co-designed our website with children, young people and families including providing a range of self-help advice, tops tips and on line courses	As a result we have a much improved information for parents/carers, children/young people and partners/professionals.

The partnership also held a review which sought to understand:

- Are we supporting the right children, young people and their families
- Are we providing the right support?
- Is the support effective and timely
- What is the impact of the pandemic

As part of the review the Early Help locality teams held a desk top review of the needs of 668 children/young people and met with children, young people and their families to understand

- What they felt 'a good life' looked and felt like
- What ambitions they had for their future
- What might stop them achieving their ambitions
- What impact had COVID had on their lives?

From the feedback and the desk top review the strategy was developed, it is an ambitious strategy designed to transform the ways of working and provision of early support to families in Walsall, key to achieving this ambition is a multi-agency commitment to provide effective, proportionate and high quality early help and supporting families to have their needs met in their local communities.

The strategy have 4 overarching priorities

Priority One: Culture & Practice - Ensure our Early Help partnership and the way in which we work together is fully understood and that together we achieve better outcomes for families.

Priority Two: Smart use of data – Share local data to understand the needs of our children, young people and their family.

Priority Three: Resilient Communities: Use local resources in the most effective way.

Priority Four: Voice: Children, Young People, Parents & Carers are heard.

Please see attached copy of the strategy

Alongside the strategy is an associated action plan, the governance of which is overseen by the Early Help Steering Group.

3.4 Early Help Family Hub's

Within each of the four localities within Walsall there is a 'Family Hub' where a range of co-located partners including Early Help, Social Workers, DWP seconded officers, Early Help PCSO's, Black Country Women's Aid, School Nurses, working together to understand their local families and the local needs and to ensure continued and collaborative support for families through the continuum of needs set out above.

The Family Hubs continue to be developed, Walsall is one of 75 local authorities to have been awarded a 3 year grant to further establish this model, with a specific focus on five areas of support

1. Parenting
2. Perinatal Mental Health
3. Parent-Infant Relationship
4. Breastfeeding
5. Home Learning

The local authorities Early Help service based within the locality Family Hubs are critical to the whole family delivery and have three main aims

- *Deliver* - a core and pro-actively targeted Early Help offer
- *Influence* – empower and enable partners / leveraging the power of universal services e.g. health visitors, school nurses and enable and empower families to self help
- *Co-ordinate* – harness the power of communities to develop a comprehensive offer around place

The service has a range of practitioners and functions in order to support children, young people, their families and partners as follows:

Family Support: There are four teams based across the localities, the teams offer a range of evidence based support and intervention to families within their localities. With the completion of an Early Help assessment of need with families and key partners along with developing a family support plan to ensure the families do not just avoid poor outcomes but have ambition and thrive.

The team consists of

- Early Years Practitioners - providing bespoke 121 support for families with children 0-5 years of age, supporting parents/carers in helping them understanding development, attachment, play, the importance of routines and boundaries, health eating etc. The practitioners also offer group work for parents/carers in line with national campaigns such as 'look, say, sing, play' and First Words Together
- SEND Practitioners – family support dedicated practitioners for children, young people with special educational needs disabilities (SEND). The practitioners work with families to help them understand a range of disabilities and needs including autism and ADHD, the practitioners support the children, young people and their parents/carers but in place strategies with managing behaviour, overcome fear of attending school and try to get them connected into the area where they live, with activities such as specialist support groups.
- Family Practitioners – working with local families experiencing a range of difficulties, including domestic abuse, emotional health & wellbeing, mental

health financial difficulties, housing, exploitation, risk of school exclusion, neglect etc.

- Partnership Officers – responsible for coordinating partner’s responsibilities around early help/intervention and influencing the partnership within their locality, encouraging working together, delivering the ‘Time 2 Talk’ Locality meetings, a platform to connect local partners, share information and consider the early help local offer against the needs of the local families

Parenting Team – responsible for delivering a wide range of evidence based parenting programmes to families either on a one to one basis or within a group work setting, the team offer programmes for every parent/carer who live within the borough, known as the universal offer, a specific offer based on the needs of families being support by the Early Help partnership, known as the targeted offer and a bespoke offer for parents/carers open again to the Early Help partnership and to Children’s Social Care, known as the intensive/targeted offer as follows:

- Universal Offer: range of on line free courses available to any parent/carer living within the borough i.e. Understanding my pregnancy, labour and birth, Understanding my baby, Understanding my child, Understanding my teenager, Understanding my child with additional needs etc.
- Targeted virtual web based courses with follow up ‘aftercare support’ available i.e. Support your children’s emotional well-being and develop routines and boundaries within the family, Grandparents’ Programme, Reducing Parental Conflict, Parenting a Teenager Programme, Being a Parent, Parenting Plus – Parenting for separated families etc.
- Intensive and targeted: delivery of one to one and group work programmes i.e. Mellow, Being a dad and a range of bespoke one to one support within family homes

Early Help Volunteers Service - 18 local volunteers, representative of the community, have links into the community work with and support families with a range of interventions, including supporting to attend meetings, appointments, help with parenting, support children and young people with homework and act as the ‘community scaffolding’ to integrate and ensure families feel connected.

The volunteers also enable families to ‘get involved’ and co-design services and activities, as well as the volunteering offering work experience opportunities and for some to gain work related skills.

Locality Development Team – responsible for developing a range of Early Help core services based on the needs of local families:

- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Local Offer - which provides children, young people who have additional needs, their parents, carers and other partners information, advice, support including a guide to the local services available in their local areas , as well as applying for and delivering a range of grant funded initiatives including
- Holiday Activity Fund (HAF) – a Department for Education grant delivering holiday activities Easter, Summer and Christmas to vulnerable children and young people
- Community Activity Reducing Exploitation (CARE) – a Department for Education grant to support young people aged 11 plus who have additional needs (diagnosed and undiagnosed) and who are at risk of low level exploitation

3.5 Demand

The demand and complexity of the children, young people and families referred to Early Help continues to increase:

- Approximately 900 children, young people and their families are being supported by Locality Early Help 0-19 service at any one time, of which
- 89% (801) are supported by our own Early Help locality teams
- Early Help assessments have increased by 53% (592) in 2021 compared to 2019 (281)

Early Help localities are starting to see and feel this impact; a recent review of the children and young people referred and supported since April 2021 evidenced that

- the main areas of need for support were associated with challenging behaviour, domestic abuse, emotional health & wellbeing, mental health concerns of the parents/carers, education and housing

The review also identified that

- 62% (558) of children, young people and their families had 3 or more of the presenting needs whilst,
- 25% (140) of these have complex needs of between 5 and 9 presenting needs, this is a 48% increase compared to 2019 where less than 4% of all contacts had 5 plus presenting needs, evidencing the complexity.
- The review evidenced that whilst partners are *slowly* increasing their role of lead professional, they predominately support those 'less complex' families at an Early Help level who have 2 of the presenting needs above.

4. Financial information

The Supporting Families programme is a payment by results with claims being sent by the local authority on a quarterly basis with the DLUHC having a risk based approach to assurance checks, targeting tailored assurance visits.

For a successful claim to be made the local authority has to evidence that all of the outcome framework measures have been met, and sustained for a 6 month period after the family have ceased received the support, no further referrals to key services should have been made and specifically education attendance, attainment has to be evidenced. For each successful claim Supporting Families pay £800.

Walsall have predicted a claim ratio of

- 2022/23 75% (351 families)
- 2023/24 85% (643 families)
- 2024/25 100% (936 families)

This is based on the increasing needs and complexities of families as set out in the demand section above.

The Supporting Families grant £1.4m (which includes payment by results) funds a range of ongoing committed activities across Early Help and Children's Social Care.

5. Reducing Inequalities

Effective and timely Early Help that improves parental relationships, family function and learning behaviours in children can help prevent or reduce a range of issues that result in or exacerbate inequality including exclusion from school, parental conflict, youth offending, and children reaching a crisis requiring interventions by social workers.

6. Decide

The Early Help partnership within its review has set out the key priorities for 2022 to 2024 based on the needs of families and the changes to the Supporting Families framework. Whilst there is no decision for scrutiny to be made around the priorities, scrutiny are asked to support the direction of travel and endorse the achievements made so far.

7. Respond

The Early Help partnership is responding to the needs of local families and to the Governments Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities Supporting Families programme, the Early Help Steering group oversees the delivery of the strategy and has this as an agenda item for update reports to be taken quarterly, with an annual review help November of each year.

Achieving and evidencing the outcomes secured for families and in turn meeting the payment by results target continues to be a significant focus and one that is critical to the Early Help service. Preparing for the significant increase set by the department for the 'target' number of families successfully supported and have continued to sustain the outcomes for a 6 month period after the support has ceased is critical. With the overall target set for Walsall

- 2022/23 at 468 families
- 2023/24 at 757 families
- 2024/25 at 936 families

8. Review

A review report to scrutiny is scheduled for 12 month, detailing the achievements, barriers, the changes to the early help process and payment by results.

Background papers

Early Help Strategy 2021- 2024

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