



Strategy for early help

Children, young people and families in Warrington

2018/21





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Introduction

Early help refers to support required during the critical early years of a child's life. This strategy sets out Warrington's continued ambition for the development of a partnership approach for prevention and early help aimed at improving outcomes for all children, young people and families and ensuring that the right support is given at the right time.

The aim in Warrington is to develop a co-ordinated early help offer, embedded within a whole family approach, supported by the early help assessment that builds protective factors and family resilience and reduces expenditure on costly reactive services.

Effective early help can transform lives – helping parents/carers into work, stabilising children at school and removing the barriers to living healthy and productive lives. We know that there are a number of vulnerable children, young people and families in Warrington who are more likely to experience difficulties in their lives and may need support to help overcome them.

These children, young people and families are likely to be those:

- Suffering neglect (see neglect strategy)
- With alcohol, drug or substance misuse issues or those living with a parent/carer who has alcohol, drug or substance misuse issues
- Who are affected by domestic abuse
- Who have an identified mental health problem or whose parents/carers have mental health issues
- Who engage in anti-social behaviour, in receipt of a police reprimand or on the edge of criminal activity and/or with a parent or carer in prison
- In families experiencing severe or persistent poverty or whose families are homeless or long-term unemployed
- At risk of entering or re-entering children's social care
- Who are teenage parents or pregnant teenagers
- Missing education
- Missing from home
- Who are young carers
- With disabilities or special educational needs (SEND)
- Who are asylum seekers and refugees
- With past trauma and low resilience
- In families where parenting capacity is limited.

Vision

“ Our ambition is that families, particularly those with multiple and complex needs, will have access to co-ordinated early help in accordance with need as soon as difficulties are identified. The offer is personalised, multi-agency, evidenced based and embedded within a whole family approach. Children and young people in those families will live safe, healthy and fulfilling lives and develop into responsible adult citizens, thereby breaking the intergenerational cycles of risk and vulnerability.

Families will become more resilient and develop capabilities to prevent and resolve problems. The aim is to reduce demand for higher cost specialist services and achieve greater use of community based universal preventive services. Social capital and resilience within local communities will be identified and enhanced.



Purpose

The strategy will set out how all partners will work together to plan, commission and deliver a range of provision to support children, young people and their families at the earliest opportunity. This means providing low level services at the right time to meet family's needs and to keep them in control of resolving their issues and problems.

The aims of the strategy are to:

- Maintain, develop and enhance the range of early help services available
- Build community capacity and resilience to reduce reliance on services
- Shift resource from expensive specialist services to early help provision
- Develop a whole system workforce that is able to provide effective early help
- Ensure that there is shared understanding and commitment from all partners in delivering an effective early help offer



The local context

The local context highlights the level of importance and challenge in getting Warrington's early help offer right. This means providing high-quality local services for children and their families founded on the following six principles:

1. Proportionate universalism - services are available to all but targeted in proportion to the level of need
2. Prevention and early intervention
3. Community partnerships
4. A focus on meeting the needs of marginalised groups
5. Greater integration and better multi-agency working
6. Evidence-based provision.

This strategy, and our work to deliver it, will be based on an understanding of the needs of our families throughout the borough.

The delivery of an effective early help offer is not the responsibility of a single agency. It requires a whole family approach owned by all the stakeholders working with children, young people and their families in Warrington. Children, young people and their families should be supported to have the skills and confidence to take ownership and responsibility for their own health and wellbeing.

Governance will be provided by the early help improvement steering group. Scrutiny and challenge will be provided by Warrington Safeguarding Children's Board (WSCB), the Quality Assurance Board and through Warrington's Health and Wellbeing Board. The early help improvement steering group will monitor progress against strategic objectives on a quarterly basis.

The WSCB will challenge the improvement steering group on the effective delivery of this strategy via regular progress reports. The early help steering group will include representatives from all partner agencies.



Principles

Early help is provided to prevent or reduce the need for statutory or specialist interventions wherever possible. It seeks to meet the need, resolve the problem and prevent it becoming entrenched. Within this context, our early help approach is based on a set of shared principles:

1. Early help is everyone's responsibility

All children and young people should have the opportunity to reach their full potential. Parents have the primary responsibility to meet the needs of their children and ensure the wellbeing and prosperity of their family. All children, young people and their families should be enabled and encouraged to look after their own health and wellbeing by ensuring they have access to appropriate and relevant information to make informed choices. It is essential that when support is required, we all act in a timely manner, in the right way, with the right support to improve children's life chances.

2. Children and families' needs will be met by universal services

Universal services such as GPs, midwives, health visitors and schools working with children and adults have a role to ensure families are achieving positive outcomes. Universal services must remain involved even if a child and family is receiving additional or specialist support.

3. Listen to children and families and treat them as partners

In the majority of cases it should be the decision of the parents when to ask for help or advice, but there are occasions when practitioners need to engage parents actively to help prevent problems becoming more serious. All services will keep the child at the centre of the solution, encourage families to harness their own resourcefulness and build supportive community networks.

4. Understand the needs of the child and young person

All services for children and families will safeguard and promote the health and wellbeing of children and young people. Operating within the "right service, right time" principle, skilled practitioners will work in an open, transparent and collaborative way with families and with each other, with the confidence to intervene and challenge when appropriate.

5. Services must work together to deliver early help

All services will work together with children and families to promote family strengths, identify solutions, build resilience, independence and support the transition from childhood to adulthood. This includes effective information sharing and joint working between professionals in children and adults services in order to reduce the impact that adult's problems have on children's experiences.

Strategic objectives

- To identify the needs of children, young people and their families
- To understand and respond quickly to the needs of children and young people and families
- To support the refocusing of resources from crisis intervention to prevention
- To support families to achieve their full potential
- To enable and encourage children, young people and their families to look after their own health and wellbeing.
- To ensure that learning and evidence informs future service design and delivery
- For multi-agency partnerships to work together to improve outcomes for children, young people and families
- To agree a clear practice framework for early help



Key indicators outcome measures

The following outcome indicators will demonstrate the effectiveness of this strategy and its implementation in achieving the strategic objectives:

- Reduction in the number of children in care
- Maintenance of the number of children subject to a safeguarding plan below the core average
- Reduction in the number of re-registrations
- Reduction in the number of repeat referrals to MASH (post initial assessment)
- Reduction in the number of Children in Need plans open to Children's Social Care (excluding LAC and Child Protection Plans)
- Reduction in the number of children excluded from school
- Reduction in persistent school absenteeism
- Reduction in the number of children and young people involved in anti-social behaviour and crime
- Reduction in the number of young people in custody
- Increased number in employment, training or education (both children and adults)
- Reduction in teenage conceptions and teenage parents
- Reduction in attendance at A&E departments
- Reduction in the proportion of low birth weights
- Increase in the prevalence of breastfeeding at 6 to 8 weeks after birth
- Reduction in the proportion of children considered overweight or obese

- Reduction in mothers smoking during pregnancy
- Increase the number of children considered to be 'school ready' and achieving a good level development
- Improve access to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
- Reduction in the number of EHCPs, especially for under five year olds

The following 'output' measure, which constitutes a proxy indicator of an effective, co-ordinated early help offer, will also be adopted:

- Increase in the number of 'open' early help assessments (internally and by other partner agencies)
- Increase of co-authored early help assessments (especially by schools and health colleagues)
- Increase in evidence based tools being used (GCP, CSE, and DASH)
- Increase in the number of team members around the family meetings
- Increase of "new" referrals to the early help services
- Increase of referrals triaged at the MASH appropriately (shared with the early help front door if not met for social care intervention)

Our approach

“The right help, at the right time, in the right place, by the right person”

This describes the relationships between the four levels of need and is based on Warrington Borough Council’s agreed threshold of need.

Level 1 – universal services

The majority of children and families will never come into contact with statutory or specialist services. The basic needs of all children can usually be met by their family and community networks and universal services such as maternity care, GPs, health visiting, nurseries, playgroups, childcare, healthcare, schools and youth services.

Level 2 – early help and additional needs (single agency services)

Some children and young people are likely to need extra help to be healthy, safe and achieve their full potential. They are usually best supported on a voluntary basis, by those who already work with them such as children centres, various health professionals or schools. These services are well placed to recognise, co-ordinate and respond when early help may be necessary so that support is coherent and addresses family vulnerabilities early.

Level 3 – early help with additional multiple and complex needs (multi-agency services)

Some children, young people and families may require a very intensive or a substantial package of support where the concerns can be managed without the need for statutory social work or other specialist interventions. These needs may require a coordinated,

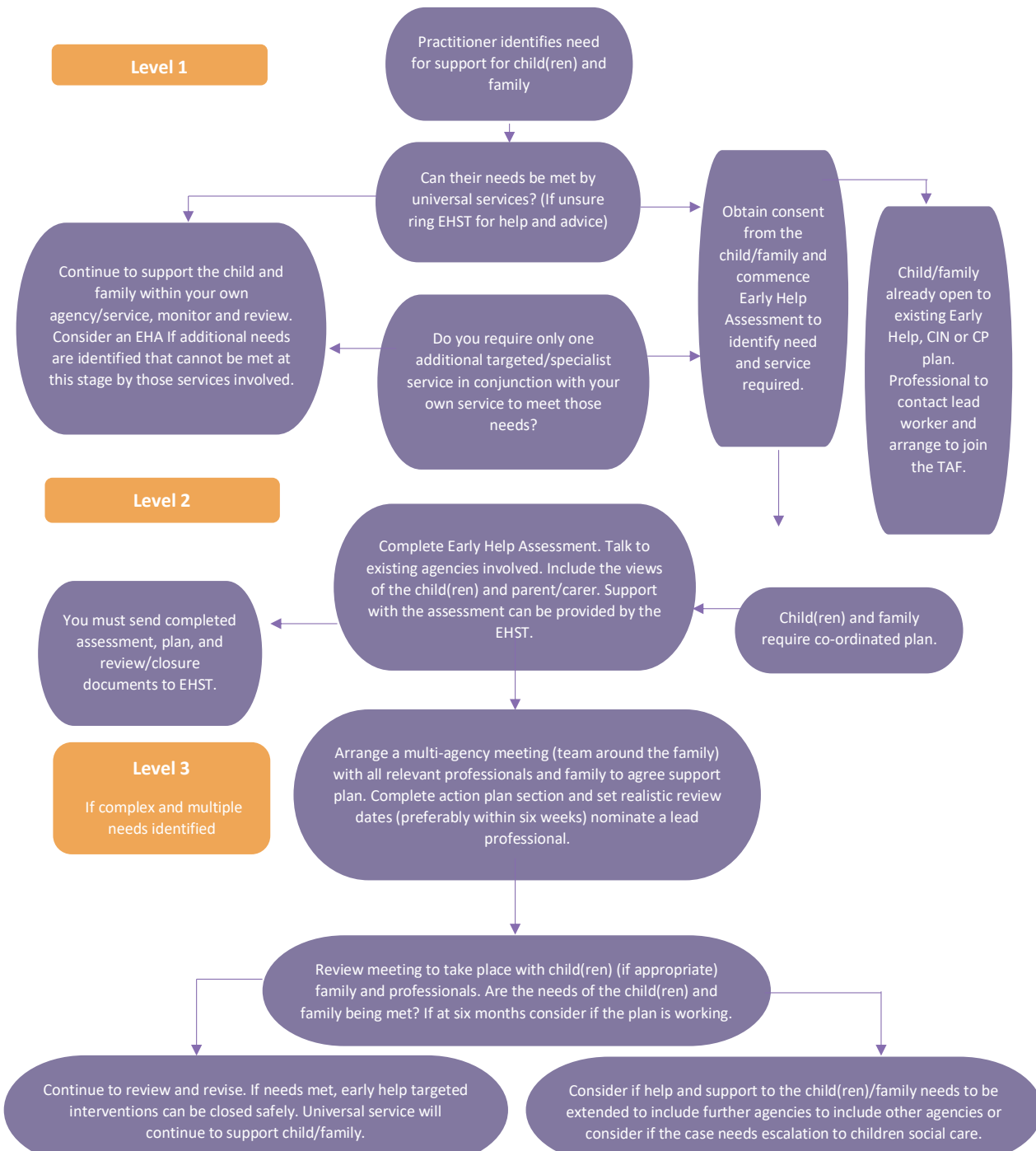
multi-disciplinary response from a number of agencies working with the consent of the family, to deliver targeted or intensive support. A multi-agency team around the family will identify a lead professional and develop a robust early help plan to prevent escalation of concerns. Early help assessment is needed. There should also be appropriate information, training and awareness raising activities available to enable all children, young people and their families to have the skills and confidence to look after their own health and wellbeing and to make informed lifestyle choices.

Level 4 – children in need and children in need of protection

Some children and young peoples’ needs are so significant that immediate statutory social work or highly specialist intervention is required to prevent significant harm or serious risks to health or welfare. These needs may emerge after a series of, or despite targeted interventions, or be sudden and/or so serious as to require and immediate request for services. There will be a concern that the child is likely to, or is suffering harm or development delay. These are children who have experienced significant harm, who are at risk of significant harm (Section 47) and includes children where there are significant welfare concerns (Section 17). A Children and Family Assessment and/or more immediate response, coordinated by a social worker, is required to determine the level of support/ intervention. The Level 4 offer is also referred to as Universal Partnership Plus within the Health Visiting & School Nursing Service.

Appendix 1: Early help process

The early help support team can be contacted at earlyhelpsupport@warrington.gcsx.gov.uk



Appendix 2:

What does effective early help feel like for children and families?

Early help is working well when children and families can say...



We are listened to, heard and respected at every stage of our journey through Early Help.

We have a trusted individual in our lives that we can confidently turn to for help when we need it.

We are empowered by the services involved in our lives to make the changes we want to make.

We only have to tell our story once.

Our lives are better because of early help .

We are supported to think about what we want to change and how we might make those changes.

We have one go to person that we can rely on to coordinate our Early Help support and keep things simple and manageable.

We have flexible support, including longer or shorter term help depending on our needs.

We can have early help for the whole family.

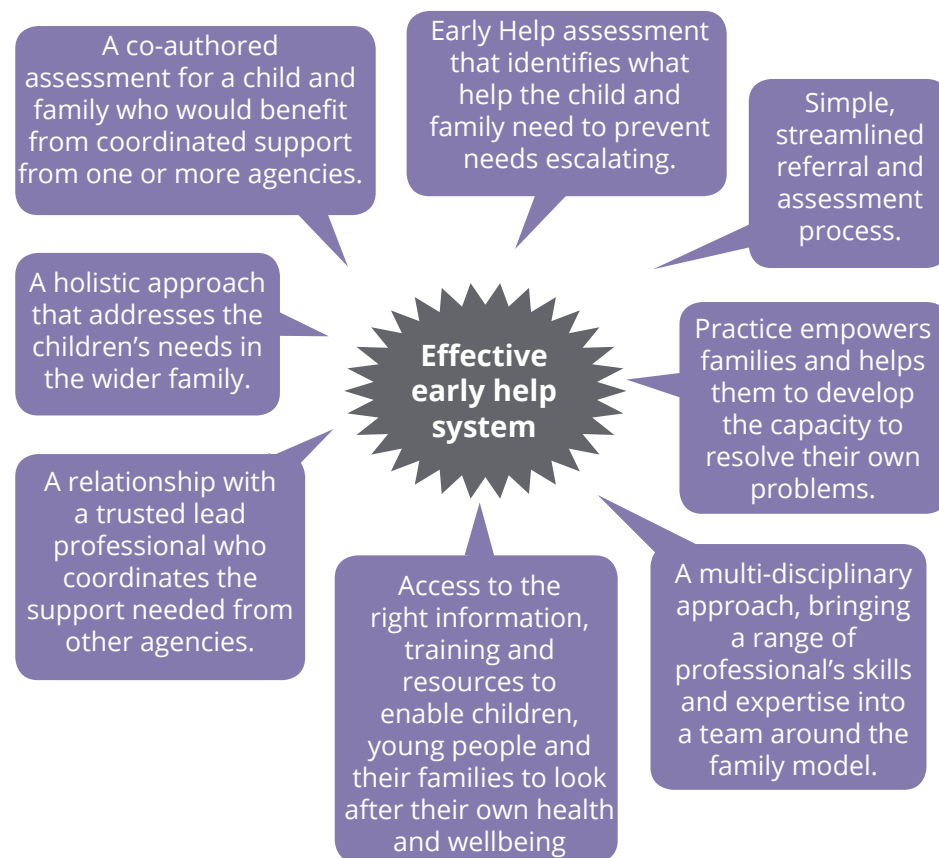
We have got the skills and confidence to look after our own health and wellbeing and make informed choices.

We have as much continuity as possible, without unnecessary service changes.

We can focus on strengths and building resilience.

Appendix 3: What does effective early help look like for professionals?

A strong early help system means a capable and confident workforce, supported by effective and efficient processes. Working together to safeguard children (2015) sets out the critical features of effective early help as:



Appendix 4: Useful links

[Early help in Warrington](#)

[Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018](#)

[Early Intervention: The next steps](#)

[C4EO - Grasping the nettle: early intervention for children families and communities](#)

[Warrington's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment \(JSNA\)](#)

[Cost of late intervention: EIF analysis \(2016\)](#)

[Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0-25 years](#)

[Warrington's threshold of need and response - guidance 2017](#)

[Warrington Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#)