

City of York

Safeguarding Children Partnership



City of York Safeguarding Children Partnership

Early Help Strategy

2021 - 2023



Foreword

All children deserve the best possible start in life¹, that is why we are delighted to share with you our ambition as a partnership to collectively work together to deliver Early Help support for our children, young people and their families across the City of York.

The City of York Safeguarding Partnership is energetic in supporting all partners to come together to support children and families in their local communities.

This new multi-agency **Early Help Strategy** has been developed by the City of York Safeguarding Partnership (CYSCP) in consultation with children and young people, families, a number of its partners and professionals including Health, Children's social care, Police, Education representatives and other stakeholders of the CYSCP.

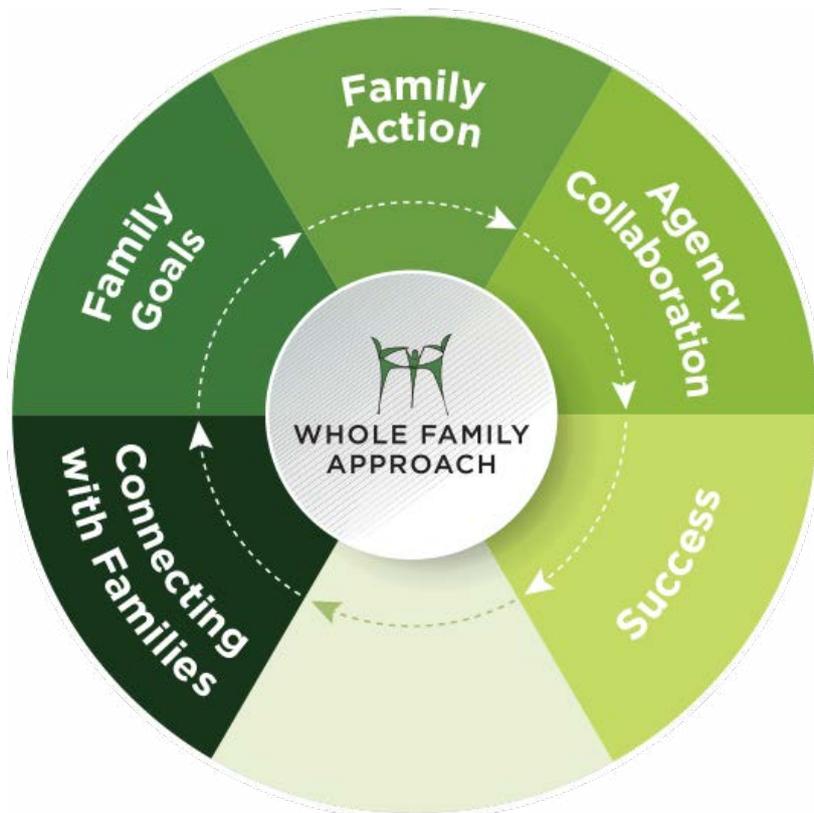
Approximately 500 people contributed by way of survey, consultation sessions, engagement with schools forums, and learning masterclass.

We have listened to feedback and as a result have made improvements to our overall response to early help support within the City of York.

The overarching vision of the **Early Help Strategy** is to 'ensure that children, young people and their families receive the right help at the right time' (Working Together, 2018).

We will look to achieve this through our mission statement 'every conversation starts with the child'.

Through our practice model '**Systemic Practice**' we will work collectively and collaboratively across all of our organisations and systems to ensure that we work with families as a whole rather than individuals.



¹ <https://www.eif.org.uk/why-it-matters>

(Source: <https://www.wholefamilyapproach.org/get-started/>)

Through a systemic approach, change can be achieved through exploring relationship patterns and understanding how they impact on children.

We know from research that the first **1,001 days which begins in pregnancy and for the first two years following birth is a critical period in their life²**.

‘What happens during these early years (starting in the womb) has lifelong effects on many aspects of health and well-being – from obesity, heart disease and mental health, to educational achievement and economic status.’ ‘Fair Society, Healthy Lives’ (The Marmot Review).

If children do not have a positive early start in life this can lead to poorer outcomes, in early health and development throughout childhood, adolescence and in some circumstances, we know this could potentially cause Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) in adulthood.

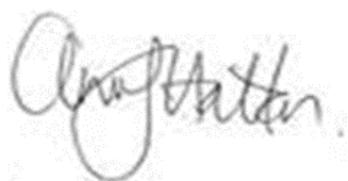
‘ACES are potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood (0-17 years) such as experiencing violence, abuse, or neglect; witnessing violence in the home; and having a family member attempt or die by suicide’ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2019).

Therefore, providing Early Help support to families at the right time is more effective in promoting the welfare of children. This early identification of support means that children will less likely be at risk of harm and in turn will achieve better outcomes and start in life.

Early help is not a service

An 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.

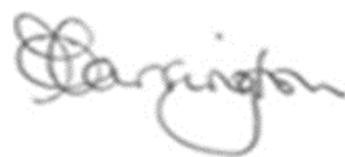
‘Everyone who works with children has a responsibility for keeping them safe’ (Working Together, 2018)³



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² https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/973112/The_best_start_for_life_a_vision_for_the_1_001_critical_days.pdf

³ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/942454/Working_together_to_safeguard_children_inter_agency_guidance.pdf

What do Children, Young People and Families in the City of York tell us?

'Every Conversation starts with the Child' as part of our development work of this strategy we consulted with children, young and their families.

What did our Children tell us?

"I needed more early intervention rather than waiting to a point of crisis."

"I'd definitely say that seeing all the children as individuals would have made a huge difference. Me and my sister were treated the same but our needs were very and remain very different and so the support offered should have been very different."

"I understand from a safeguarding and parental responsibility perspective that it is definitely not okay to just ignore the issue that there are adults who need support, I feel however that there needs to be more focus on those earliest stages in order to 'nip it in the bud' and as a result break that cycle."

"I would have focused particularly on the early intervention aspect of support, from my experience what lacked in my life before coming into care was having parents who were capable of a lot of essential life skills such as parenting, managing behaviour, cooking and cleaning."

What did our families tell us?

"I felt the support was beneficial to my family."

"Support should remain in place longer and gradually be removed as I felt alone when the support was removed."

"I found the early help assessment support useful and most of the workers approachable. It was nice to be able to off load and be listened to."

"The early help assessment support helped me so much with my debt and housing and getting back on track with my routine with the children."

"I feel like the support should be more readily available and we could meet more often to share our problems and not feel alone. Maybe a support group with other parents."

What is our collective approach to working with families within the City of York?

The City of York is implementing a strengths based practice model which is centered on **Systemic Practice**. Systemic practice seeks to make sense of the world through relationships, focusing on the whole family system rather than individuals. Through a systemic approach, change can be achieved through exploring relationship patterns and how they impact on children. The practice framework sets out City of York's ambition for the way in which we work with children, young people and families.

This approach links to the broader initiatives of the **'Good Help Model'**

- which focusses on early intervention and prevention, enabling the growth of a wider movement of professionals beyond the existing network
- practitioners know what is happening locally
- families are directed to community resources
- positive change within the community is supported

These principles resonate within the [City of York Practice Framework](#) in encouraging all professionals to come together under a shared 'umbrella' and speak with the same voice.

What is Early Help?

'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 and not the sole responsibility of one service. **'Everyone who works with children has a responsibility for keeping them safe' (Working Together, 2018)⁴.**

Early Help provides support at a time of **need** in a child or young person's life and support can be given at any point including transition into becoming an adult.

An 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 **'ensure that children, young people and their families receive the right help at the right time'**.

Families have interactions with numerous people and services and success lies with being supported by trusted professionals already involved with the family.

The City of York have adopted a collaborative approach in which families are supported by those who already know them and can assess and provide early intervention at a very early level.

Being able to work in partnership with children and families and bring in other agencies in a whole family approach.

Early Help also supports the reduction of children and young people accessing statutory interventions, targeted interventions and improves outcomes.

⁴ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/942454/Working_together_to_safeguard_children_inter_agency_guidance.pdf

‘No single practitioner can have a full picture of a child’s needs and circumstances everyone who comes into contact with them has a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information and taking prompt action (Working Together, 2018)’.

Levels of Need

The City of York Safeguarding Partnership (CYSCP) multi-agency ‘Threshold Document: Level of Need Descriptors’ provides a more aligned multi-agency framework for assessing and responding to need and risks of children and young people. This document is a guide and a starting point to assist practitioners to come to a common understanding. It provides help and guidance to practitioners at all levels, working in the statutory, public, voluntary and independent sectors who work with children and their families. It allows practitioners to identify levels of need and risk through the use of indicators related to outcomes. It also supports practitioners in determining how their service can best support and work alongside children.

Levels of need and response



How will we gain consent and share information?

Early Help is voluntary and consent from children, young people and their families to work with them should always be sought. A consent and information sharing form should be used. It is important that children and families understand that consent is required to share information and are agreeable to information sharing as part of the assessment of early help and support needs.

Intervening as early as possible, regardless of the age of the child or young person, can positively improve their outcomes.

For further information regarding information sharing please refer to the [North Yorkshire and City of York Overarching Information Sharing Protocol](#).

For further information regarding the Early Help Privacy Notice and Consent Form please visit the [CYSCP Early Help Page](#).

Our Vision to deliver Early Help

Our overarching vision is to ‘ensure that children, young people and their families receive the right help at the right time’ (Working Together, 2018).

This is supported by the Governments Supporting Families agenda which states:

‘Now is the time to be even more ambitious in helping families to thrive. Our vision is to ensure that those families who need support get it at the right point, in the right way, as early as possible.

Great things happen when families build on their strengths, call on their support networks and tackle their problems head on and early on.

Children, parents and carers are most able to build resilience with services at their side who know them well and can offer trusted guidance.

At its heart, the national programme then and now, is about locally delivered early help for families, led by the keyworkers and local partners who know their areas and families best’⁵

How we will work together to deliver Early Help across the City of York?

A strong community offer that builds resilience

The City of York Council have created a Customer and Communities Directorate with an emphasis on supporting customers, building resilient communities, recognising that local people are best placed to understand and find solutions to the particular needs of their communities.

There will be an increased focus on prevention, early help and asset-based community development working across all life stages. This approach also means creating a wide-reaching Early Help network within communities which will also involve working with those people who are already supported by services to connect them to their communities.

⁵ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/973186/Chapter_1_Supporting_Families_Programme_Guidance.pdf

The Customer and Communities Directorate will promote early help for vulnerable families through the co-design of Family Hubs, linked to the Supporting Families agenda to meet the needs of local communities.

A strong universal offer that builds resilience

We want all children to get the best start in life. Our universal approaches start by supporting all families from before the birth of the child. As a basic principle, the first person to offer support to a child or young person and their family should be the professional identifying the issue; this person should complete an assessment that is a whole family assessment using the partnership agreed assessment tool and provide either a single agency response or co-ordinate a team around the child and family. The assessment should be able to be shared with other agencies if there is a need to co-ordinate further support from other agencies.

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

Using the early help assessment to identify need, a referral can then be made to the Child and Family Support Service if there is a need for targeted intervention. 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.

Clear pathways to support

We want all families to have easy access to support when it's 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, 'Think family' approach by joining up support across the age range.

Joining up how we work

We want families to experience an integrated approach to early help assessment, planning and support. Using a single process across the City of York Safeguarding Children Partnership will reduce the danger of duplicating effort avoiding different agencies asking families to repeat information and to maximise resources available within the City of York.

A whole family approach

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.

Measuring the difference, we make

We want children and families to receive support that meets their needs at the right time and makes a difference to their health, happiness and safety and to achieve their potential. We will measure the impact of our joined up approach across the partnership to check that what we do is effective and a good use of resources.

Early Help is everyone's responsibility

Every professional working with or engaging with children and families, regardless of organisation has a responsibility to deliver Early Help and support the family to access appropriate services. Our early help offer puts the responsibility on all professionals from across the partnership to identify emerging concerns and potential unmet needs for individual children and families, irrespective of the whether they are providing services to children or adults. Professionals working in universal services are best placed to identify children or their families, who are at risk of poor outcomes. These will be in health services, such as midwives, health visitors, GPs and school nurses, or in nursery and education provision at any age from early years onwards.

Alongside this is the use of local intelligence set out in the Supporting Families (previously known as 'Troubled Families) agenda criteria that supports us to identify both groups of children and families that are more likely to be in need of early support.

How will we measure our success?

The CYSCP have identified a number of key objectives in order to measure the effectiveness of this strategy. These are outlined below:

- a) Increase in the number of families supported through a multi-agency whole family early help plan
- b) Number of families making progress against the goals in their early help plan
- c) Number of families who are satisfied with the support they receive
- d) Reduction in the number of statutory social work assessments which result in closure
- e) Reduction of re-referrals to CSC and to targeted early help services
- f) Reduction in the number of families subject to child in need and child protection plans
- g) Reduction of contacts requesting a service from the local area team Early Help Service – meaning that families are supported by those who already know them and can provide early intervention at a very early level.
- h) An increased number of partner agency led Early Help assessments and co-ordination of team around the child and family support meetings to progress Early Help plans.
- i) Number of Early Help Audits within the partnership regarding early help assessment, and plans carried out where the outcome is 'Good Practice'
- j) Number of Early Help Audits of the Child and Family Support Service regarding direct work and intervention where the outcome is 'Good Practice'
- k) Number of multi-agency practitioners trained in understanding parental conflict
- l) Number of multi-agency practitioners trained in Early Help related courses to respond to neglect, domestic abuse; mental health needs etc.

How will the strategy be monitored?

The CYSCP will develop an action plan in response to those objectives, the CYSCP will also rigorously monitor and evaluate Early Help support to establish how effective it is, through various methods such as audits and feedback. This action plan will be monitored by the multi-agency Early Help steering group which reports to the Safeguarding Professional Practice Subgroup.

The CYSCP will also provide feedback on outcomes and the difference it makes to our stakeholders, including children, young people, and families, to ensure that our partners continue to deliver effective Early Help support within the City of York.

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

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](#).

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.

If you need information regarding services available to a child and family in their local area. Please contact the Family Information Service: fis@york.gov.uk

If you need to make a referral to the local area team targeted support service send your completed early help assessment to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub in York (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.

Phone: **01904 551900**

Email: MASH@york.gov.uk

Outside office hours, at weekends and on public holidays contact the emergency duty team telephone: **01609 780780**

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: www.saferchildrenyork.org.uk/concerned-about-a-child-or-young-person.htm