

# The Early Help Strategy 2019 to 2021

## Promoting resilience in families

In partnership with:



Building  
stronger  
families



**Berkshire Healthcare**  
NHS Foundation Trust



**East Berkshire**  
Clinical Commissioning Group



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## Foreword

When we talk about Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (RBWM) we mean more than just the council. We mean the groups of services and organisations who are working with children, young people and families in the Royal Borough. This includes Achieving for Children (AfC), voluntary organisations, police, education, health, clinical commissioning group, children's centres, youth services, family support services, the youth offending team, social care, community organisations and the Local Safeguarding Children's Board. This strategy has been co-produced and is owned by these partners and the community as early help is everyone's responsibility.

The Early Help Strategy sits under the multi-agency Early Help Governance Board, the Health and Wellbeing Board and is linked into the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB).

## Partnership commitment

This Early Help Strategy is the foundation of the borough's approach to delivering better outcomes for children, young people and their families. Achieving for Children delivers services that support the children, young people and families in the borough on behalf of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Council. Achieving for Children is a social enterprise company. For more information please go to: [www.achievingforchildren.org.uk](http://www.achievingforchildren.org.uk)

AfC alone cannot meet the needs of our children, young people and families. Multi-agency partnership working is a key component of our early help approach based on the principle that **delivering early help is everyone's responsibility**. We have high aspirations for delivering the ambition outlined in this strategy based on successful partnership working not only between statutory agencies such as the council, health agencies and the police, but also the voluntary and community sector, private providers and of course families.

A partnership framework has been used to develop the strategy in consultation with the range of stakeholders outlined above.

Key partners will evaluate the progress made on our journey towards meeting the aspirations identified to ensure good outcomes for children, young people and families.

The strategy sets out a vision and principles that we encourage all services working with families in the borough to commit to.

We look forward to seeing the developments over the next two years and will closely monitor the impact our early help offer has on children, young people and their families every step of the way and we will have the agility to review and change if this is necessary.



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See Appendix 1 for Partnership Principles

## Our vision: Building family resilience to effect positive change

Our aims	Objectives	Means of delivery	Performance measures
<p>All children thrive, feel safe and develop into confident adults who reach their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community</p> <p>Families have a strong sense of responsibility for their children, are resilient and have the capacity to be at least 'good enough' parents</p>	<p>Develop a locally focused, holistic family model of early help, identifying need at the earliest opportunity to provide swift and easy access to support</p> <p>Develop personalised, family focused action plans which are driven by improving outcomes</p> <p>Develop a local model of early help in which key partner agencies understand their role and are accountable for the delivery of services</p> <p>Ensure that families are actively involved in service design and planning and agreeing the support they receive</p> <p>Develop a skilled and confident workforce which has a shared understanding of early help</p>	<p>Deliver learning and development opportunities across all services, including partners, to ensure the workforce has the skills and confidence to deliver early help and manage risk</p> <p>Using the key working model as a corner stone, ensuring families are clear about what is being offered</p> <p>Develop a robust outcome framework for early help that stops problems from starting or getting worse</p> <p>Strengthen information sharing mechanisms</p> <p>Early Help services get actively involved by doing 'hands on work'</p> <p>Create multi-agency partnership panels working together to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families with agreed accountability for the delivery of the outcomes</p> <p>Change the way we work so families feel we can better help them</p>	<p>Increased number of early help assessments and plans</p> <p>Reduction in the number of repeat requests for early help support</p> <p>Increase in the number of young carers identified and their families supported</p> <p>Reduction in the number of children and young people experiencing domestic abuse</p> <p>Reduction in the number of children requiring safeguarding interventions</p> <p>Reduction in the number of young people looked after</p> <p>Reduction in children or young people who are affected by crime and/or anti-social behaviour</p> <p>Increase in the proportion of children or young people attending school regularly (over 90%)</p> <p>Retain a high level of families that report service satisfaction and demonstrate positive individual outcomes for families</p>

## What is our Early Help Strategy?

Our Early Help Strategy recognises that early help is the catalyst that can change how local partners work together and alongside children, young people and families to ensure all resources are used at the earliest opportunity and in the best way possible.

Alongside this strategy is an early help guide for families.

[www.wamls cb.org/professionals/mash-early-help](http://www.wamls cb.org/professionals/mash-early-help)

Most families, most of the time, can get on with their lives quite happily with little or no outside help. If they need help, it is usually from universal services such as local community provision, health, schools, children's centres and youth services.

However, all families have times when they face challenges, things go wrong and they don't know which way to turn. Without support to build their resilience the situation can easily escalate into bigger problems.

Our Early Help Strategy outlines how we will tailor the right support to meet the needs of the families, at the right time and right place to order to minimise problems escalating.

If we are to successfully provide early help, we need to work together to:

- understand the profile and needs of our families
- listen to what families are saying about what support they feel they need and work alongside them – 'do with, not to'
- be pro-active rather than re-active
- stop problems starting in the first place or 'nip them in the bud' before they get entrenched or escalate
- get actively involved by doing 'hands on' work that supports children, young people and their families and their community to build resilience so that they can successfully manage new problems
- be flexible in the way we work so that families feel we can better help and support them

As a multi-agency partnership, we make this commitment to children, young people and families.

- We will ask you if you are happy to work with us and we will ask for written consent from you.
- We will listen to you. When you contact any of the services you will be welcomed, listened to and not judged. We will work it out alongside you.
- We will not 'pass you around'. If calls need to be made to other agencies or further advice found to provide additional support, we will help you and not pass you on to someone else.
- When we have mutually agreed that you need additional help, we will determine together one main person who is your point of contact.

- We will ensure that early help assessments will be as simple and straightforward as possible. We will need to do assessments with you so that we know we are doing our best by you. We will, wherever possible, help you make decisions about what is right for your family.
- We will make early help services accessible to you and support you to increase your family resilience.
- We will keep you informed of plans and outcomes in relation to your own family.

See Appendix 3 and 4 which explain how this strategy links into the national context and to other strategies.

## What is early help?

Early help aims to identify needs early, so the right services can work together with families to provide targeted support before problems become more complex.

Early help is able to offer support at any time in a child's life following the emergence of a particular need. Early help is about supporting children and young people aged 0 to 19 years and their families, whenever these challenges emerge - it is not just about early years.

Children's services and other agencies also support young people who may need to transition to adult services. By working together with health, adult social care, local colleges and other services, we can support our most vulnerable young people preparing for adulthood.

Evidence suggests that an early response is a more effective and efficient way of delivering services. It is better to provide focused intervention when a problem first emerges rather than delivering costly statutory interventions when problems have escalated and become more entrenched. This includes using early help services to prevent problems getting worse. Our key goal is to reduce the demands on our specialist services and encourage families to become more resilient.

The 'Working Together 2018' document reflects our goals and aspiration.

'The provision of early help services should form part of a continuum of support to respond to the different levels of need of individual children and families.

Local areas should have a comprehensive range of effective, evidence-based services in place to address assessed needs early. The early help on offer should draw upon any local assessment of need, including the JSNA and the latest evidence of the effectiveness of early help programmes. In addition to high quality support in universal services, specific local early help services will typically include family and parenting programmes, assistance with health issues including mental health, responses to emerging thematic concerns in extra-familial contexts, and help for emerging problems relating to domestic abuse, drug or alcohol misuse by an adult or a child. Services may also focus on improving family functioning and building the family's own capability to solve problems.

This should be done within a structured, evidence-based framework involving regular review to ensure that real progress is being made. Some of these services may be delivered to parents but should always be evaluated to demonstrate the impact they are having on the outcomes for the child.'

Working together to safeguard children – July 2018

## Early help offer

The multi-agency early help offer is designed to help children, young people and families access early support and we will always aim to make it as 'accessible' as possible. The diagram below is the current agreed multi-agency threshold document. Most families will remain within universal services and will not require any additional services. However some children, young people and families will require some preventative support in order to provide support at times of difficulty.

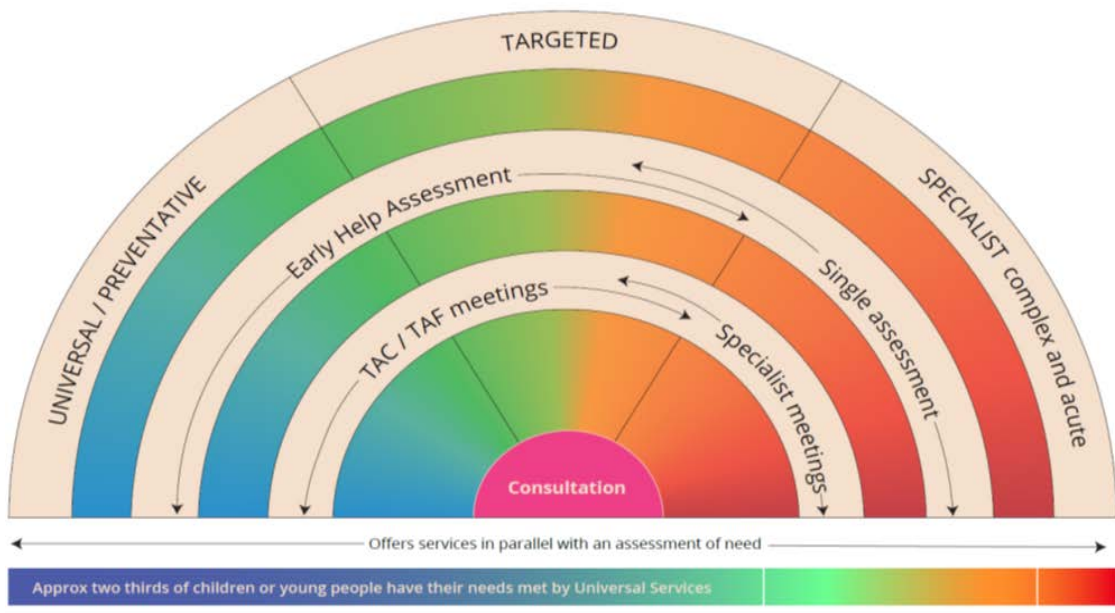
The detailed threshold document ([Windsor and Maidenhead Local Safeguarding Children Board - MASH & Early Help](#)) outlines what sort of additional preventative support can be offered. Many single agencies provide this sort of early help preventative support, for example, schools. However, a single agency may assess that they cannot meet the additional needs of a child, young person or family on their own and due to the complexities involved, require additional support from one or more services. If the needs are such that more than one service is required this moves into the realm of 'targeted early help' support. There are a range of services that provide more targeted support, most of which will be accessed via the Early Help Hub. Targeted early help sits below statutory services - specialist, complex or acute.

For relevant early help forms and practitioners guide please follow access:  
[www.wamlscb.org/professionals/mash-early-help](http://www.wamlscb.org/professionals/mash-early-help)

This thresholds chart is aimed at professionals in order to help them identify where particular needs should be met. However it is essential that services up and down the windscreen of need are sufficiently flexible so that families receive the right support at the right time, in the right way.



# Multi-Agency Threshold Guidance



The Continuum of Early Help			
Universal Services	Preventative	Targeted	Specialist
Community Services		DASH (vol)	
	Housing		
	Childrens Centres		
	Youth Service		
	School Family Worker		
	Health Visitors/School Nurses/GP's		
	Family Resilience Team		
	Parent Support programmes		
	Wellbeing		
	Youth Offending		
	Young Carers		
	Family Friends (vol)		
Community Safety			

## The Early Help Hub

The Early Help Hub is a multi-agency hub that is held weekly. It coordinates a selection of targeted early help services in the borough to ensure the most appropriate support is offered for children, young people and families to improve outcomes. There is a single point of access (SPA) for all requests for targeted early help support, as well as safeguarding referrals. The referrer and family will be kept informed throughout the process, in order to agree the best way forward. It is recognised that children, young people and families sometimes require more urgent interventions to ensure that more immediate needs are met. In these circumstances interventions may start prior to the hub reviewing the request for a targeted early help service. Safeguarding referrals will be dealt with by statutory services.

The Early Help Hub encourages and promotes greater integration and multi-agency working for more complex problems in order to ensure that we can shape targeted early help services around the needs of children, young people and families. This means that targeted support is coordinated so that services can work together with families in order to have the greatest positive impact.

### Purpose

The purpose of the Early Help Hub, operating on a borough-wide multi-agency basis, is to provide a forum which will:

- inform services where there is a need to provide targeted early help support to children, young people and families appropriately
- ensure that services are allocated effectively without duplication
- make sure that services are accountable for progressing interventions with children, young people and families
- identify an early help coordinator
- enable wider evaluation of early help interventions across the borough

### Pathway for targeted early help

When a professional or single agency has been working with a child, young person or family on a single agency preventative basis, but has assessed that the situation has become more complex and/or requires a coordinated multi-agency targeted early help response, a `request for additional support` should be made to the Single Point of Access.

The pathway consists of four parts.

- Request for additional help which will include the early help assessment (EHA) completed by the professional or single agency involved with the family (**Signs of Progress, part 1**).
- Service assessment update (**part 2**)  
If it is agreed that a targeted multi-agency early help response is required, this request will go to the Early Help Hub and a decision will be made about which targeted early help services are the most appropriate.

These service/s will update the early help assessment so that any assessments are holistic and dynamic. An early help coordinator will also be identified.

- Early help plan and review **(part 3)**.
- Closure including pre and post scores to identify the progress made **(part 4)**.

Please see [www.wamlscb.org/professionals/mash-early-help](http://www.wamlscb.org/professionals/mash-early-help) for relevant early help forms and the practitioners guide.

### **An accessible offer**

We want our early help offer to be as accessible as possible to all parents or carers and key partners. We provide a directory of services which includes clear information about what our services offer, details of any referral criteria and the practicalities of the service such as contact details and location. The directory also includes some key pathway documents for how and when to access a service. We have developed some key documents for professionals around 'step up' and 'step down' processes.

### **Information sharing**

AfC has an information sharing protocol which supports the early help delivery and the 'step up, step down' between levels of need. All agencies are provided with key guidance from the information commissioner's office around data sharing.

Communication as a wider issue is a specific focus for the strategy group to ensure key messages and updates of the implementation journey are fed through to families and partners in a meaningful and effective manner.

### **Monitoring and evaluation**

RBWM partners have a key role to play in monitoring the impact and outcomes of early help and holding partners to account for the effective delivery of the early help strategy. Every agency that provides Early Help aims to have a robust monitoring and evaluation procedures in place and they are subject to audit.

### **Measuring success**

The strategy needs to be underpinned by a clear set of performance indicators (both qualitative and quantitative) which are agreed with partners to enable the measurement of progress. The Early Help Governance Board will report on progress against these indicators to both the LSCB and the Children's Health and Wellbeing Group.

### **Early Help Strategy outcomes**

This will provide the initial progress and evaluation framework that the Early Help Governance Board (see page 16) will monitor.

## Our strategic commitment

By the end of Year 1 (2019/20) we will have in place:

- an early help strategy that is widely understood, owned and agreed by all partners
- a clear and accessible Early Help Directory website
- a clear structure and framework for our early help model of delivery
- a system in place that captures key data which informs the effectiveness of our early help services across the borough

By the end of Year 2 (2020/21) we will have in place:

- a workforce that is trained in a range of agreed, evidence-based approaches
- an evaluation partnership with an external body
- a robust set of performance indicators that reflect a collaborative multi agency approach to early help
- evidence that demonstrates improved family resilience in the borough

## Governance

The strategy is led by the Early Help Governance Board. See Appendix 5 for the terms of reference for the board. This partnership reports into the Health and Wellbeing Board.

The Board has representation from:

- Berkshire Healthcare
- Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)
- Police
- Voluntary sector
- Education
- Community Safety
- Housing
- Public Health

The strategy is also monitored by RBWM's Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB). The priorities of the board are:

- to operate an effective LSCB that focuses its work on local safeguarding priorities, including ensuring that children and young people at risk of significant harm are being safeguarded
- to strengthen and implement multi-agency agreed thresholds for intervention and early help in order to promote more effective services to safeguard vulnerable children and young people

- to assure itself that there is effective communication and engagement with children and young people that demonstrates how their wishes and feelings are both asked for and taken into account
- to ensure the LSCB has an effective learning and improvement framework in place which demonstrates evidence of outcomes and impact on practice

## Quotes from families

I went through a traumatic birth and had postnatal depression. With my mum and dad living so far away I had no support. Family Friends gave me some practical support as well as emotional. My volunteer was brilliant, nothing was too much trouble for her and she had a lovely bond with my daughter. She was absolutely fantastic.  
Parent following Family Friends support

The programme has helped me to get back to being myself and supported me in managing as a mother. I manage my health, extended family issues and children in a much better and confident manner. At the end of the day I can see a glimpse of light in myself and in my future – I can do it!  
Parent's feedback following attending the Family links nurturing parenting and personal development support groups

I did find it difficult being with people I hadn't met before, but now I don't feel scared about moving to secondary school.  
Child after attending an onwards and upwards school transition group

I've gained more confidence in myself and I can now overcome my anxiety of being around groups of people  
Parent who attended the Emotional First Aid Parenting Course

Thank you for being amazing and helping my family find happiness again, giving us the tools and valuable advice to get back on track. You are a very special lady who is amazing at your job. Thank you, we will miss you a lot.

Home life is positive, calm, a lot happier, attendance (school) is good, girls are happier, home life has improved and all round better  
Parent following intensive Family Support intervention

Can I just thank you for all you've done for me, you managed to get me up, out, socialising and into education - I've just finished my degree in Childhood and Youth with a 1<sup>st</sup>. I would never have been in this position had you not worked so hard to help me.  
Young person who previously attended the Youth Service Esteem Group

I am very pleased to say all is 100% good news. He is back to being the great lad that he used to be. He's mixing with the right people, working hard and generally being a pleasure to be with.  
Feedback from a parent following a Youth Offending Team intervention

The Wellbeing Team are absolutely invaluable and we see a significant impact for the children and families they work with.  
Headteacher

My son has learnt empathy, better communication skills and how to conduct himself during 'red mist moments'. He is putting these tools to the test at Secondary school and so far so good!  
Parent following Family Friends support

I really like seeing my drugs worker, she doesn't judge me for what I have done, but she helps me learn not to make the same mistakes again.  
Young person receiving support from Substance Misuse Service (Youth Service)

I feel a lot better after speaking about seeing dad and a lot less worried.  
Child receiving domestic abuse support from DASH (Domestic Abuse Stops Here)

Young carers has helped me create new friends and has given me a break from dealing with my siblings. I now have good cooking skills and I have had the chance to go on some great residential trips which has helped my team working skills.  
Young carer (13 years)

I feel things have really changed for the good. Now going to school more, enjoying school more and home is calmer; better atmosphere!  
Young person 15 after Intensive Family Support intervention

Individual pupil intervention was offered that focused on boosting self-esteem which impacted on the child's performance academically. The sessions were successful in working towards their aim and the child always looked forward to them. The Behaviour Support Worker has a brilliant relationship with the children that she works with.  
Class teacher following support from the Behaviour Support Team

## Appendix 1: Partnership principles

### Key underlying principles for partner organisations

In order to deliver the Early Help Strategy, the partner agencies have adopted an agreed set of underlying principles for early help work. These include the following.

#### **We are all responsible – it is in ‘all of our hands’**

- Everyone will be accountable for their actions.
- Best practice to be identified, shared and celebrated.
- Early help is a way of thinking and working to achieve practical, cost effective and sustainable solutions.
- All children, young people and families have a right to receive high quality services and should be given equal access irrespective of ethnicity, religion, disability, sexuality, gender or socio-economic status.

#### **Integrated working – every contact counts**

- Our common partnership goal is to build more resilient families.
- Services need to integrate and understand each other’s current and future roles and responsibilities better within the shared vision for early help.
- Share information quickly so that we all have the fullest picture possible.
- Thresholds to help and protect children and young people must be clearly understood so that the right services are provided at the right time.
- Understand the thresholds between early help and statutory child protection work so the escalation to social care is used as soon as required.
- The simplest solution is often the best one – in other words, take pragmatic action – early.

#### **Strengthening communities – sustainable community based help**

- Children and young people do not live in isolation of their families and communities
- Families and communities are more than able to support their children and young people if they are given support themselves so early help is framed within a community development approach...‘It takes a village to raise a child’.
- Prevention is better than cure.
- Wherever possible early help services will be co-designed and co-produced with families and communities.
- Innovation and new models, especially those which encourage sustainable social enterprises will be encouraged and supported.

#### **Using the evidence – improved outcomes**

- Use evidence-based practice where it is appropriate to the need.
- Outcomes will be measured and evaluated, including by recipients of early help.
- Outcomes used to inform future work.

## Appendix 2: National context

Two key documents were published between 2010 and 2015 which reinforced why early help is important. Graham Allen reported on intervening early in a child's life and Munro produced a review of children's care services. These reports and many others all independently reach the same conclusion in that it is important to provide early help in order to improve outcomes for children, young people and families, preventing abuse and neglect, and helping parents achieve the aspirations they have for their children.

In 2015 Ofsted conducted a thematic evaluation across 12 local authorities and reported:

'It is estimated that over two million children in the UK today are living in difficult family circumstances. These include children whose family lives are affected by parental drug and alcohol dependency, domestic abuse and poor mental health. It is crucial that these children and their families benefit from the best quality professional help at the earliest opportunity. For some families, without early help difficulties escalate, family circumstances deteriorate and children are more at risk of suffering significant harm.

Independent reviews and research have long championed approaches that provide early help for these children and their families. As Professor Eileen Munro highlighted in her review of child protection, 'preventative services can do more to reduce abuse and neglect than reactive services'. It is only right that local authorities and their partners are focusing increasingly on early help and prevention services for families. Many are now establishing a more coordinated and structured approach to this crucial role.

All make a strong and compelling case for Early Help and that no one agency can provide this support alone and greater co-ordination and joint working across and within agencies is required.'

Early Help – Whose Responsibility Is It? Ofsted 2015

Munro recommended that local authorities and other statutory partners should secure sufficient provision of local early help services for children, young people and families. Local authority areas should set out arrangements for early help and these should include 'specifying the range of professional help available to local children, young people and families, through statutory, voluntary and community services, against the local profile of need set out in the local Joint Strategic Needs Analysis (JSNA)'.



## Appendix 3: Links to other strategies

This strategy should not be seen in isolation as it is an integral part of a number of key documents all of which are aimed at improving the lives of the children and young people who live in the RBWM.

It will also help deliver four of the six themes in 'Building a borough for everyone' - RBWM's Council Plan 2017/21.

- Healthy, skilled and independent residents.
- Safe and vibrant communities.
- Well managed resources delivering value for money.
- An excellent customer experience.

The Early Help Strategy has been developed in the context of national and local policy. For example:

- Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy
- Troubled Families Programme
- Domestic Abuse Strategy
- Children and Families Act (2014) relating to special educational needs and disability (SEND) reforms
- Local Transformation Plan for Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing (East Berkshire).

Other documents which set the scene for our Early Help Strategy include:

- 'Start well, live better': a manifesto for the public's health which sets out 12 important and practical actions for anyone serious about giving our children the best possible chance of a healthy and happy life.
- 'The link between pupil health and wellbeing and attainment' which includes a summary of the key evidence that highlights the link between health and wellbeing and educational attainment.

## Appendix 4: Terms of Reference for Achieving for Children's (RBWM) Early Help Governance Board

### 1. The role of an Early Help Governance Board

The board will bring together key partners to co-ordinate and deliver early help services for the children, young people and families of the RBWM.

Early help is defined as 'intervening early and as soon as possible to tackle problems emerging for children, young people and families, or with a population most at risk of developing problems. Early intervention may occur at any point in a child's or young person's life.'

Early help maximises life chances for children, improves outcomes for families and prevents more complex problems emerging. Both universal and targeted services play an important role in the early help offer. Universal preventative approaches prevent problems from developing and targeted interventions support those with existing risk factors and vulnerabilities in order to reduce the severity of problems and prevent the escalation on need.

The delivery of an effective early help offer is not the responsibility of a single agency. Early help requires a partnership approach owned by all stakeholders working with children, young people, parents and families. The Early Help Governance Board aims to achieve the following:

- to devise, implement and monitor the impact of an Early Help Strategy for RBWM
- to ensure that the early help offer is wide-ranging and accessible at universal, preventative and targeted levels of need
- to ensure that all partners have a shared vision, common language and complementary skills which puts the child and family at the centre of all interventions
- to build and strengthen the capacity of universal and preventative services and support families to become more resilient
- to monitor the performance of early help services, holding the responsible senior managers to account
- to devise and implement a communication strategy for early help

### 2. Responsibilities of the board

- Leadership and oversight of early help services.
- Contribute to the local multi-agency strategies and working with local and national strategies such as the Troubled Families agenda.
- Safeguard children and young people who receive early help services.
- Act as the governance body for local early help services.
- Members should have sufficient decision making powers to prevent delays in committing resources.

- Early Help partnerships need to agree provision for the delivery of significant operational activity carried out in their name.

### 3. Characteristics of effective boards

- Key statutory partners are represented, together with other key delivery agencies and stakeholders.
- The board meets at least quarterly, with a continuity of board membership and regular attendance.
- The board works to agreed terms of reference defining its remit, membership, delegation, attendance and decision-making powers.
- Individual members are inducted into the role, are able to act as local 'champions' for early help services and have lead responsibility for key areas of activity.
- The views of service users and the wider community are actively sought and considered.
- Actively oversees the formulation and implementation of early help services and encourages services to invest in self-assessment and peer review processes as ways of developing practice and improving outcomes.
- Early help income, expenditure and commissioning activity are regularly reviewed.
- There is a culture of learning and wider dissemination of lessons from community safeguarding and public protection incidents, thematic inspections and other relevant processes through local safeguarding and public protection structures.

### 4. Membership

Key partners must be represented at the board:

- the local authority (children's services managers)
- education
- health
- CCG
- police

In addition, the board may benefit from including a wider membership to include:

- housing providers
- voluntary sector reps
- elected members

It is important to emphasise that the partnership should reflect the most appropriate local arrangement for maximum effectiveness and therefore the composition may change over time.

Early help managers are asking for challenge and support. In order for this to happen multi-agency commitment is needed.

## 5. Expectations of agenda

Should include:

- budget
- overview of the Service Transformation Matrix Model (STMM), early help self-assessment
- Improvement Plan update.
- agreed performance indicators
- practice changes
- Early Help Service development across all partners

To be decided:

- future governance board reporting expectations
- themes for the coming year
- template for reporting

## 6. Accessibility

The board must make appropriate arrangements to ensure attendance by all members as far as possible. These may include consideration of times and venues of meetings to take account of members' professional and personal circumstances.

The chairperson shall make arrangements to ensure that participation by all members is facilitated at meetings.

## 7. Declarations of Interest

When the board is discussing the commissioning and de-commissioning of specific services, any member with an interest in providing that service – whether in the public, private, or voluntary sector – needs to declare their interest to the chairperson, preferably before the meeting.

Members having a personal interest in a matter under discussion may be asked by the chairperson to leave the meeting for the duration of the discussion and will, in all cases, not be able to participate in any vote on the matter.

A member cannot represent more than one organisation at the same time.

## 8. Confidentiality

At the beginning of each meeting, the chairperson should consider whether there are any matters on the agenda which should be considered as confidential items. Such items should be minuted separately and not be available for public scrutiny.

Members of the board should consider whether they have a personal interest in any confidential matters and declare it if they have. The declaration of interest rules will then apply.

## 9. Openness of meetings

Board meetings are not open to the public, but members of the public may request or be invited to attend as observers at the discretion of the chairperson.

## 10. Stakeholder groups and forums

The Board may set up working groups as appropriate, either on a short term or permanent basis, to inform the board's decision making. Such groups may be used to ensure, for example:

- specific professional involvement or interest groups
- encouraging further partnership working
- promoting stronger links with the local community

## 11. Meetings

Governance board meetings will be subject to the following terms of reference.

## 12. Organisation

- The board will hold a minimum of three meetings a year.
- The Deputy Director of Children's Services will be chairperson and vice chairperson will be elected from amongst its members. Re-election of both posts will occur after four years.
- The community service manager or team manager shall be responsible for servicing the meetings of the board, ensuring that agenda papers are provided a week in advance, minutes are taken and action agreed by the board are undertaken.
- If members fail to attend three meetings without apologies or sending suitable alternative representation, the representative may be disqualified.
- Items for the agenda for the meetings should be provided to the chairperson before the meeting. Urgent matters of 'any other business' shall be taken only by agreement of the chairperson

## 13. Role of the chairperson

The role of the chair is to:

- monitor and review the early help plan
- monitor and review policies
- monitor and review budgets
- monitor and review impact and outcomes for families
- evaluate partnership working and contributions

## 14. Responsibilities of members of the Early Help Governance Board

- To ensure that high quality, inclusive and continually improving services are provided to all elements of early help services.
- To receive reports from early help services on progress and ensure that targets are monitored and evaluated.
- To advise on planning and any changes to improve performance.
- To attend board meetings or give apologies if unable to attend.
- To treat as confidential any matters discussed within the board unless agreed otherwise by the board.
- To take collective responsibility for any decisions made by the board and to support those decisions outside of the group.
- To act as an active channel for communications between the board and the organisation that the member is representing, including representing views other than their own.
- If representing a service providing agency, to work for agreed and appropriate levels of service provision from that agency, as contained in any delivery plan.