

Sefton Integrated Early Help Strategy for Children, Young People and Families

2020 - 2025



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Foreword and Introduction

We are delighted to introduce the revised Early Help strategy for Sefton.

This integrated strategy is central to delivering our shared ambition that all children, young people and families in Sefton will be safe, healthy and happy, and will aspire to be the best they can be. It has been co-produced with partners, as we recognise that early help is a collaborative approach, not just an isolated service provision.

The strategy is just the beginning. We realise this strategy cannot be achieved by a single organisation. Working together is important in times of challenge, austerity has seen significant cuts in the money going to public services so there is a need to work differently and achieve better with less. In line with the newly refreshed Children and Young People's Plan we will ensure children are heard, happy, healthy and achieve. We understand that it is our collective responsibility to ensure we can create the right conditions for children, young people and families to thrive in Sefton. We will need to continue to work with partners to embed the strategy, develop skills and knowledge across the workforce, to ensure practitioners are confident with the approach.

We understand that for many children, young people and families problems may emerge. Early help is provided to prevent or reduce the need for statutory or specialist interventions wherever possible. Early help seeks to meet the need, resolve the problem and prevent it becoming entrenched.

As we refresh the strategy, we celebrate the work that has already been done and look forward to the next stage of early help and how much we can achieve together to support children, young people and families across Sefton

Councillor John Joseph Kelly

Cabinet Member

Vicky Buchanan

Interim Director of Children's Social Care and Education



Our Behaviour

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Support Inspiration
- Tailor support to the needs of the individual child, young person & family


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Support children, young people & families
- Constructively challenge when needed


- 

Support each other
- Ensure there is sufficient learning & development for the frontline workforce young person and family


- 

Take responsibility
- Create opportunities for success



Our Model



Our Passion

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Families understand & access help & support when they are in need of it. (uptake of early help offer, increase in EH assessments, referrals, reduction in inappropriate referrals to CSC, decrease in stepping up)
- The workforce recognise & work with families to address unmet needs at the earliest point (Timeliness of referrals, length of time on a plan, timeliness of referral to assessment 'drift')

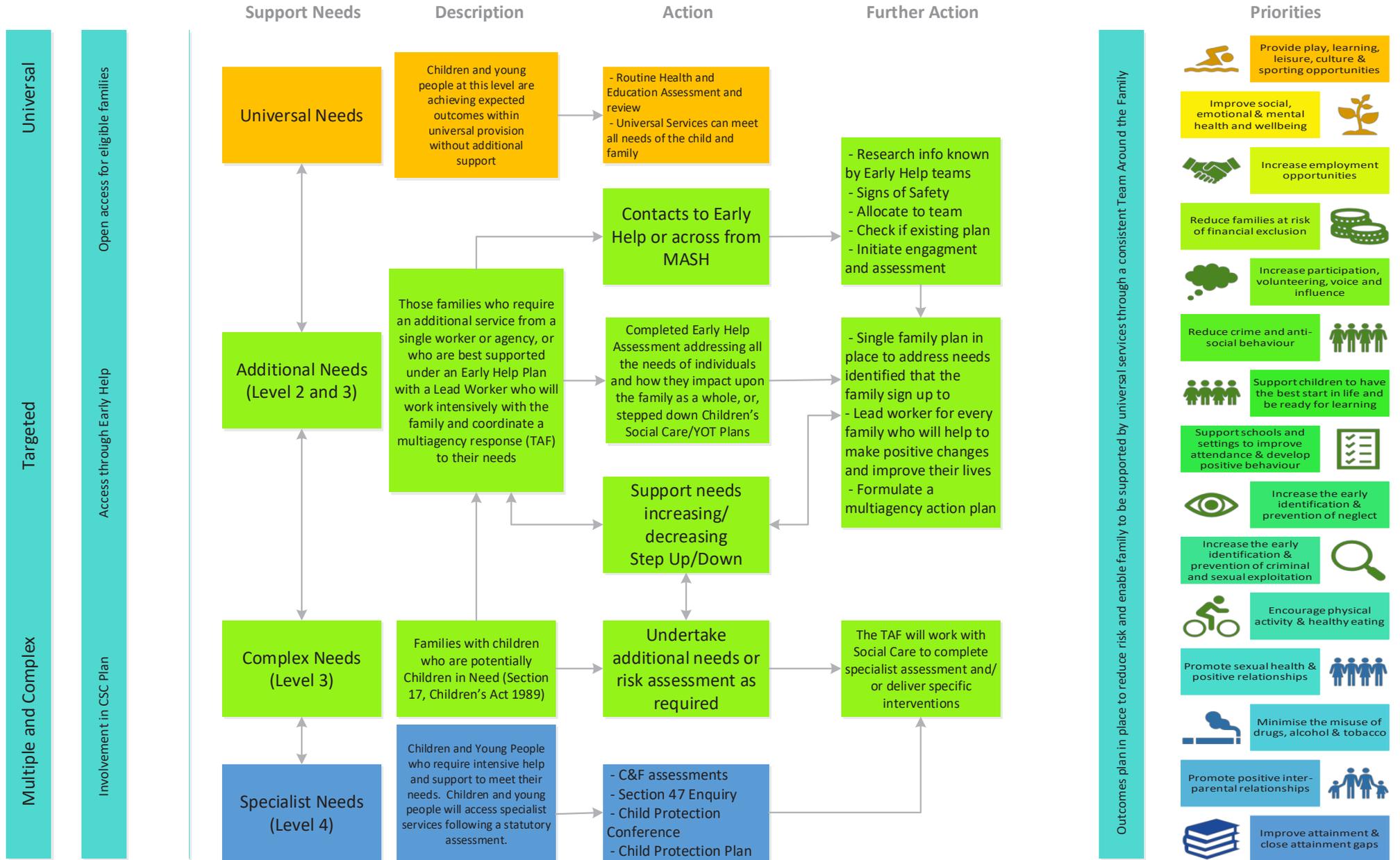

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Ensure that the needs of vulnerable children & families are prioritised. (Allocation timeliness, categorising of need, SEND EHC plans, 2 Year old offer, Appropriateness of lead practitioners)
- Support emotional health & wellbeing services to meet the needs of children, young people & families. (Health indicators, Commissioning, A&E attendances)


- 

People are supported to make good choices and minimise risk taking behaviours. (Young Offenders, Exploitation, A&E attendances, Bullying)

Sefton Early Help Strategy



Outcomes plan in place to reduce risk and enable family to be supported by universal services through a consistent Team Around the Family

Preface

In July 2018, the Government published revised statutory guidance; 'Working Together to Safeguard Children: guidance to inter-agency working' to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. This sets out the legal requirements that health professionals, social workers, police, education professionals and others working with children must follow. The guidance emphasises that effective

support and safeguarding for children and young people is the responsibility of all professionals working with children and young people and provides advice in support to sections 10 and 11 of the Children Act 2014, where the primary duties for all agencies are set out.

Scope of the strategy

Effective early help requires a whole family approach and encompasses all stakeholders working with children and families. This includes Health, Police, Education, Children's Social Care, Local Authority Early Help, Voluntary Community and Faith organisations and the wider public.

The revised strategy acknowledges that agencies will be addressing their own distinct needs and meeting a range of key performance indicators against a variety of policy drivers and aims to provide an umbrella framework of key principles that can be applied across all agendas.

Engagement with the strategy by all sectors will require some cultural and operational changes but by doing so, and actively working together to deliver outcomes, we believe that we will positively change the relationship between the community and the public sector in ways which build and strengthen community resilience.

We are still at the beginning of this journey and the strategy is aspirational, but we are building on solid foundations established through the success of existing early intervention work.

Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2018

'Effective early help relies upon local organisations and agencies working together to: identify children and families who would benefit from early help; undertake an assessment of the need for early help; provide targeted early help services to address the assessed needs of a child and their family which focuses on activity to improve the outcomes for the child'



Introduction

Early help and early intervention mean taking action to support a child, young person or their family early on when a problem emerges. It can be required at any stage in a child's life from pre-birth through to adulthood and applies to any problem or need that the family cannot deal with or meet on their own.

We know from what children and their families tell us that it can be daunting asking for help. Families have told us that they don't want to have to tell their story more than once to lots of different people. This strategy will help us to make every contact count.

The Strategy supports 'right help, from the right person at the right time' principles being adopted across Sefton which will help ensure a cohesive early help offer. The strategy will be delivered by all partners collectively with a commitment to:

- Working better together in an open, honest partnership approach with consent of the child and their family
- Identifying strengths and needs and working together to find practical and achievable solutions
- Providing the right information and advice to enable children and their families to make positive changes themselves with support tailored to their needs
- Help children and their families to build protective factors and family resilience to prevent situations recurring.



What is it like for Children and Young People living in Sefton?



The number of children and young people living in Sefton (0-25 year olds) is 62,100 a fall of 14% (9,990) since 2001.



Sefton is a good place for children and young people to live and grow up. Most receive their immunisations, with rates being close to - or above - the national average.



On the whole our children and young people achieve in school. However, there are still some that do not reach their full potential which impacts on their ability to go into further education, training and to get a job.



The health of children and young people is generally improving and they have access to a wide range of physical activity opportunities.



Almost 20% of our children are obese when they leave primary school at 11 years.

The number of hospital admissions related to alcohol use in under 18's is also higher (though declining) than the England average and childhood smoking rates are average.



There are fewer teenage mothers in the borough than in previous years. Whilst the total number of births in Sefton is not rising, there has been an increase in the number of babies born to non-British born women. These mothers may need additional support to access maternity and other health services.



Sefton mothers are more likely to smoke during pregnancy and less likely to breastfeed their baby at 6 weeks.



Some of our children and young people cannot live with their parents or families; they live with Foster Carers, in children's homes or are adopted. These children and young people are more likely to experience poor life chances



As of November 2019 there are 550 Looked After Children

If Sefton had 100 children (0-18 years inc.)

As they grown up:

- 19 will live in poverty
- 6 will be low birth weight babies (below (2.5kg)
- 66 will be achieving good development in Early Years Foundation Stage One
- 76 will achieved year 1 phonics
- 93 will make expected progress in primary school in Reading
- 94 will make expected progress in primary school in Writing
- 93 will make expected progress in primary school in Maths
- 58 will achieve A*-C GCSEs including Maths and English
- 25 will be overweight/obese in reception
- 35 will be overweight/obese by year 6
- 16 will be eligible for free school meals
- 5 will be persistently absent from school
- 13 will live with lone parent families

If Sefton's constituencies had 100 children (0-18 years inclusive)

As they grown up:

	Southport	Central	Bootle
Will live in poverty	15	9	29
Will be low birth weight babies (below (2.5kg)	7	6	8
Will make expected progress in primary school	93	96	92
Will achieve A*-C GCSEs including Maths and English	58	58	52
Will be overweight/obese in reception	22	23	28
Will be overweight/obese by year 6	36	31	39
Will be eligible for free school meals	13	13	28
Will be persistently absent from school	8	7	9
Will live with lone parent families	19	15	31

Detailed analysis of our families and their communities can be found in:

- Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
[https://www.sefton.gov.uk/your-council/plans-policies/business-intelligence,-insight,-performance/joint-strategic-needs-assessment-\(jsna\).aspx](https://www.sefton.gov.uk/your-council/plans-policies/business-intelligence,-insight,-performance/joint-strategic-needs-assessment-(jsna).aspx)

Vision

Our ambition is that **all children, young people and families in Sefton will be safe, healthy and happy, and will aspire to be the best they can be.**

In Sefton, we believe that every child should have the opportunity to reach their full potential. We believe that children should grow and achieve within their own families and communities, when it is in their best interests and it is safe for them to do so. By working together, we will develop flexible services which are responsive to children and families' needs.

Sefton is establishing a vision for the future that will provide:

- A system wide approach, with joint, pooled resources and integrated pathways operating across organisational boundaries
- An outcome focussed, system wide approach delivering long term sustainable solutions for individuals and families that enables (to secure) resilience and independence
- A shift from acute provision to an increase in prevention and early help activity
- Evidence based early help interventions that are built around customer need
- Locality based delivery with a trauma informed workforce

Early help is everyone's responsibility; we want children, families, communities and agencies to work together so that families are assisted to help themselves and are supported as soon as a need arises, thereby improving their wellbeing and life chances.

Early help means providing help for children and families as soon as problems start to emerge or when there is a strong likelihood that problems will emerge in the future. If early help is not offered, there is a very real risk that for some children, their social and emotional development will be irrevocably impaired, they will experience significant harm, or their family life will break down.

Although research shows that the most impact can be made during a child's early years, and in particular their first 1001 critical days, early help is not just for very young children, as problems may arise at any point throughout childhood and adolescence. Early help in pregnancy and supporting parents to be good parents is also important. Early help includes targeted services designed to reduce needs or prevent specific problems from becoming entrenched, and there is substantial evidence that early help can make a difference in improving outcomes.

As a partnership, we will:

- Understand those families where children may be at risk of not reaching their full potential and share concerns
- Build a relationship with the family as early as possible, and work with them to create a family environment that provides children with the best life chances and prevent problems from arising or escalating
- Reduce the number of children and their families requiring support from specialist services.

Sefton's Integrated Early Help Strategy has been developed across the partnership and will align with Sefton's vision for the new operating model. This will enable us to provide a joined up, effective early help offer for children aged 0 to 19 years (up to 25 for children with disabilities) and their families. Support services will be provided at a locality level, will be evidence-based and delivered through a shared partnership approach to delivering universal and early help services.

Early Help Outcomes across the Partnership

Sefton's Turnaround Programme has been mainstreamed and there is a detailed multi-agency plan in place; the Service Transformation Maturity Plan. This plan will be monitored through the Sefton Early Help Partnership Group and updated regularly. There is strong commitment across the partnership, at all levels, to delivering change which improves the outcomes and experience for children and their families. This maturity model will be used to measure the impact and success of early help alongside **ASPIRE** - the Locality Outcomes Framework.

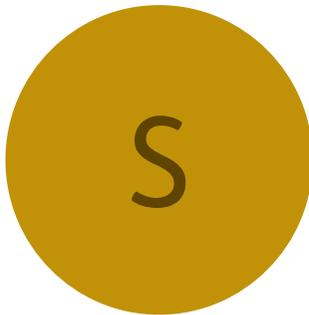
ASPIRE includes:

Sefton are committed to delivering an effective all age partnership early help offer and a more effective whole family systemic locality-based approach to early help.

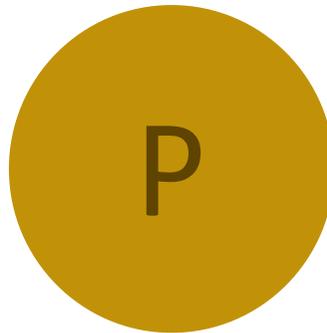
Through ASPIRE early help priorities have been identified to support the reduction in demand, and impact, upon statutory services by preventing escalation, where safe to do so, to statutory and specialist services. We also focus on families coming to early help from statutory and specialist services, bringing them down the continuum of need and helping them to access, and remain accessing, universal services.



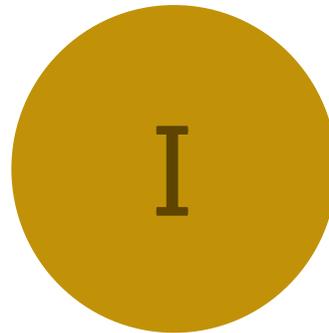
Addressing Worklessness, financial and social exclusions



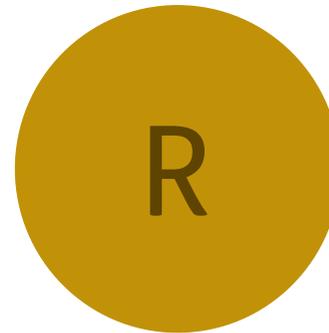
Supporting Families and Individuals in Need by providing the right support



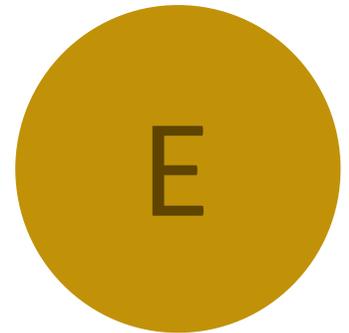
Promoting Education, Training, Employment and Volunteering



Increasing Attendance at schools, improve speech and language development and levels of progress that children and young people make



Reducing Domestic Abuse, risk of homelessness and isolation



Engaging Children, Families and Individuals with a range of Health and Wellbeing Needs

Our key priorities include:



Provide play, learning, leisure, culture & sporting opportunities

Improve social, emotional & mental health and wellbeing



Increase employment opportunities

Improve financial resilience of families and reduce at risk of financial exclusion



Increase participation, volunteering, voice and influence

Ensure children and families feel safe in their communities by tackling and reducing crime and anti-social behaviour



Support children to have the best start in life and be ready for learning

Support schools and settings to improve attendance & develop positive behaviour



Increase the early identification & prevention of neglect

Increase the early identification & prevention of criminal and sexual exploitation



Encourage physical activity & healthy eating

Promote sexual health & positive relationships



Minimise the misuse of drugs, alcohol & tobacco

Promote positive inter parental relationships



Improve attainment & close attainment gaps

Guiding Principles for the Early Help Partnership

Problems may emerge at any point through childhood and adolescence. Early help is provided to prevent or reduce the need for statutory or specialist interventions wherever possible. Early help 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. We recognise that parenting can be challenging and asking for help should be seen as a sign of responsibility rather than a parenting 'failure'. It is essential that when support is required, we all act to provide the right help, from the right worker, at the right time, to improve children's life chances.
- 2. Wherever possible all children and families' needs will be met by universal services.** Universal services working with children and adults have a role to ensure families are achieving positive outcomes, to be aware of potential difficulties and act early to prevent needs escalating. Universal services must remain involved even if a child is receiving additional or specialist support to ensure there is a joined up, whole system response to meeting needs.
- 3. Listen to children and families and treat them as partners.** In most cases it should be the decision of the parents when to ask for help or advice, although there are occasions when practitioners may need to engage parents actively, and with their consent, help them to prevent problems becoming more serious. All services must keep the child at the centre of the solution, encourage families to harness their own resourcefulness and build supportive community networks, thereby enabling families to develop resilience.
- 4. Focus on whole Family working.** Sefton is committed to a culture shift in the way that we engage and work with families. In particular, adopting a 'whole family approach' and strongly encouraging multi- agency working. This requires a workforce development strategy that underpins all work with children and families across thresholds. The principles of 'whole family working', 'sustained outcomes' and building 'progression' into the way that we work with families will help to ensure that education, employment and training are a key feature in families' action plans.
- 5. All services will work together with children and families to promote family strengths, build resilience and independence.** This includes effective information sharing and joint working between professionals in children's and adult's services to reduce the impact that adult's problems have on children's experiences.
- 6. Understanding needs.** We can best understand the needs of children and families within their communities and maximise our multi-agency resources using evidence-based approaches, learning from feedback and listening to the voice of the child and family. With robust performance management in place we will be able to evidence positive, sustainable impact and best value.
- 7. Ensure clear pathways to support.** We want all families to have easy access to support when it is needed. We will set out clearly what support is available and make it easy for families to contact services themselves.
- 8. Everyone will encourage integrated working.** This includes anyone who works with children and families, part or all of the time; whether employed, self-employed or in a voluntary capacity. If you are a nurse, volunteer, teacher, early help worker, sports coach, social worker or any other member of the children's workforce, integrated working and building strong working relationships concerns you. We want the services supporting children and families to work much more closely together, forging lasting and meaningful relationships that improve the lives of the children of Sefton in the short, medium and long term.

OfSTED, Early Help: Whose Responsibility? 2015

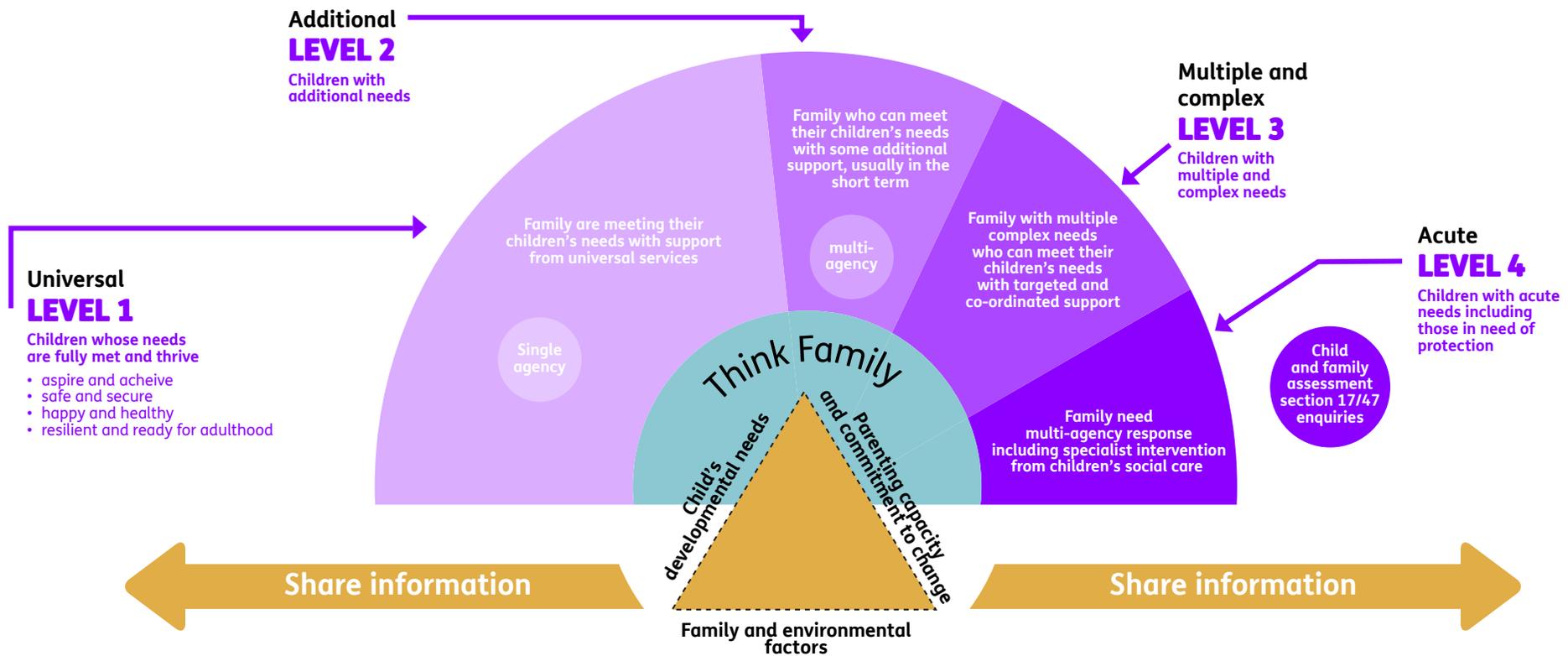
'Local authorities and partner agencies delivering early help to children and families should improve the quality and consistency of assessment and plans by ensuring plans are regularly reviewed and that these reviews evaluate the child's and family's progress'

Our Early Help Approach

Effective support through the ‘right help, from the right worker, at the right time’ principles will improve the relationship between the four levels of need; **Universal, Additional, Multiple and Complex and Acute need.**

Since 2014 we have successfully used a ‘threshold of need’ model to correctly identify the level of need and proportionate support needed. The Level of Need document published in October 2017 is fully implemented across the partnership; this document is however currently under review.

‘Where a child and family would benefit from co-ordinated support from more than one organisation or agency there should be an inter-agency assessment. These early help assessments should be evidence-based, be clear about the action to be taken and services to be provided and identify what help the child and family require to prevent needs escalating to a point where intervention would be needed through a statutory assessment...’



Assessment and planning for children and families in Sefton

Identifying needs at an early stage using the Early Help Assessment gives agencies working with children, young people and their families a common tool to understand the needs of the child or young person and their family. It is only once the full needs are identified that the appropriate support can then be put in place. It is an expectation that where the needs of a family have been identified for additional support, an Early Help Assessment for the whole family will be completed, in partnership with the family.

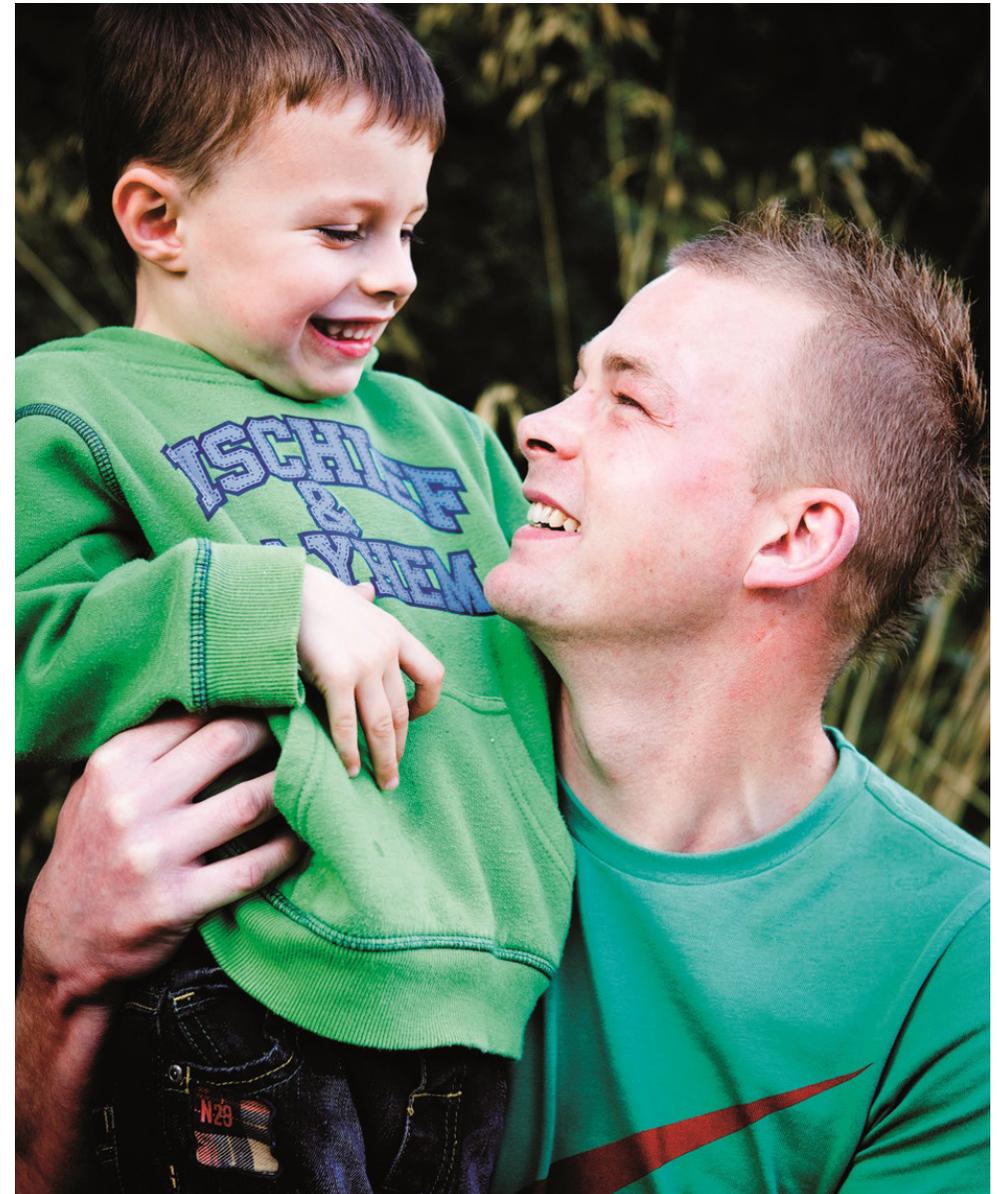
Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 makes it clear that safeguarding children and families and promoting their welfare is the responsibility of all practitioners working with children and young people, and that practitioners should understand the criteria for taking action across a continuum of need, including Early Help.

Effective early help relies upon local organisations and agencies working together to:

- identify children and families who would benefit from early help
- undertake an assessment of the need for early help
- provide targeted early help services to address the assessed needs of a child and their family which focuses on activity to improve the outcomes for the child

Early help assessments should be evidence-based and co-produced with families, be clear about the action to be taken, and services to be provided, and focuses on improving outcomes.

Within the assessment it is important to highlight the strengths and resources within the family. This is a useful focus when agreeing the action plan and helping other agencies to understand the protective factors within the family and identify





how they can facilitate change. The more strengths present, the lower the risk will be and as support progresses it would be expected that risk factors decrease, and strengths increase.

It is not expected that practitioners will be experts in all areas of the assessment. During the assessment stage the Team Around the Family (TAF) can begin to be established. The practitioner completing the assessment will act as the lead until their role in supporting the family comes to an end. The Lead Worker can call upon their colleagues supporting the family to assist in the assessment process. This ensures that the intervention is proportionate, appropriate, timely and effective.

The Early Help Family Assessment is designed to help families to develop self-help and self-management skills in order to better meet their long term needs and to reduce their reliance on public services.

If the outcome of this assessment is single agency, the work will be completed by a lead worker. If however, the outcome identifies multifaceted problems and need for more than one agency, then a multi-agency action plan should be put in place through the assess-plan-review process.

An ongoing programme of training will be available for all practitioners regarding the assess-plan-review process and associated tools. Partners will be encouraged to complete assessments, which will be quality assured to maintain a high standard.

Other assessment tools are available to complement Early Help Family Assessment. The Outcome Star tools are a suite of assessment tools that can be helpful in evaluating, areas of, need and strength and supporting families.

For instances where neglect has been identified as the primary factor, the Graded Care Profile 2 should be completed with the contribution of practitioners involved and used as the ongoing assessment tool to measure outcomes.

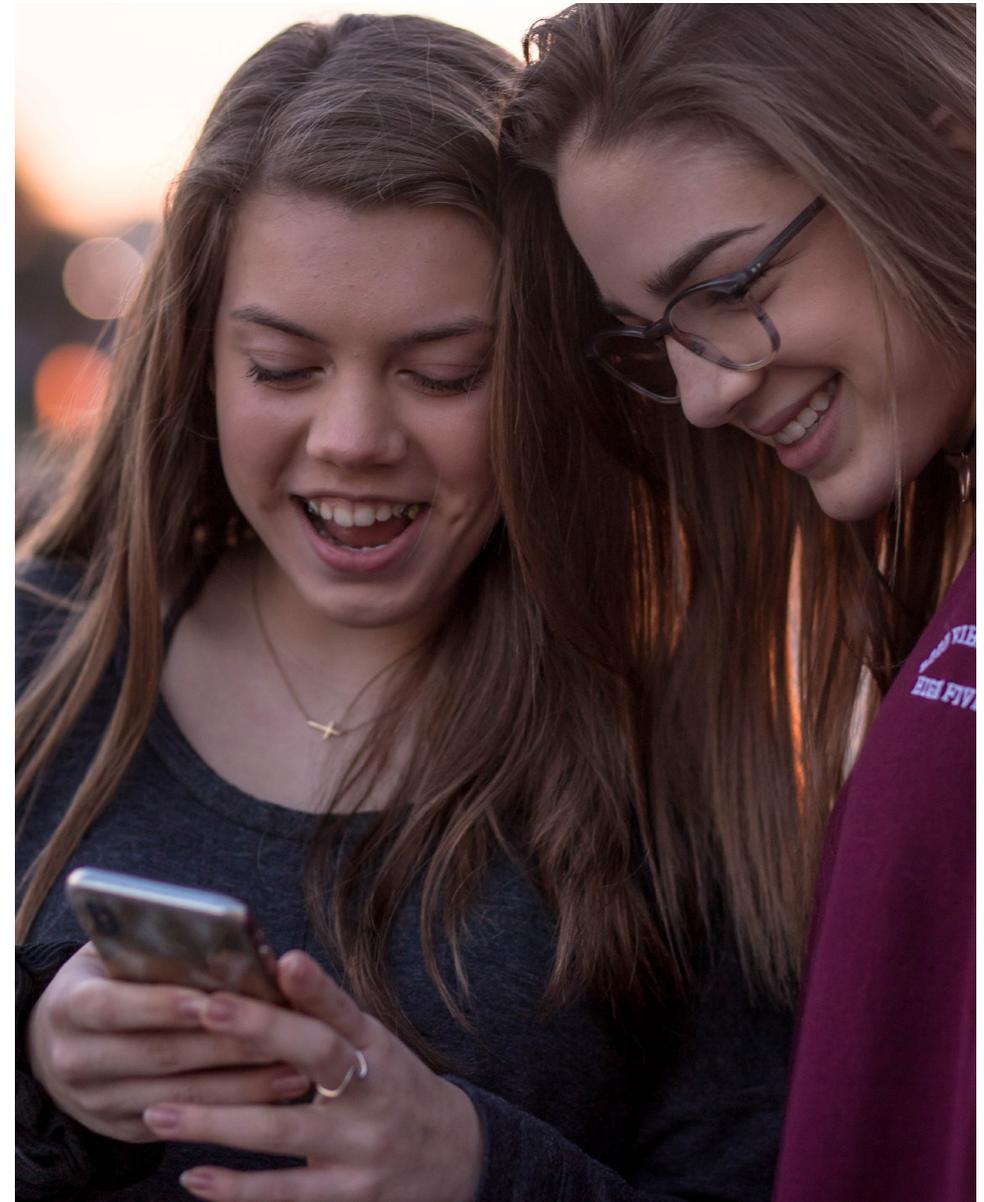
Sefton's Assess-Plan-Review guidance for practitioners; provides them with a guide of how to deliver effective early help support and explains the criteria for providing help to children, young people and their families.

Sefton Council's Locality Model

Sefton's locality model is a joined-up and collaborative way of working to help our residents achieve improved health, wellbeing and independence.

The locality early help model takes a whole family approach which helps to identify what needs to be done and what action needs to be taken, with a focus on strengths. Together we will look at what is going well, what could be better and what needs to happen to achieve improvement.

The localities delivery networks will help to facilitate much stronger collaboration and integration across universal and targeted services. This will include schools, GPs and other health services, the police, voluntary, faith and community sector agencies and a wide range of Council services such as Housing Options and Children's Social Care.



Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2018

'Where a child and family would benefit from co-ordinated support from more than one organisation or agency there should be an inter-agency assessment. These early help assessments should be evidence-based, be clear about the action to be taken and services to be provided and identify what help the child and family require to prevent needs escalating to a point where intervention would be needed through a statutory assessment...'

Delivery model for Early Help

To ensure we have a mature early help system we need to transform the way professionals work with each other and with families, and to develop the right culture, systems and behaviours that support the delivery of the model across the partnership. We have, through the work of the Sefton Safeguarding Children Board, a strong commitment by partners to undertake this transformation and to develop the right culture, systems and behaviours needed to have a mature early help system in place in Sefton.

The key areas for development during 2020-2025 are:

1. Establish Effective Leadership, Partnership Working and Governance

There are many positive examples of multi-agency working across Sefton to deliver good outcomes for children and their families and we will continue to expand on this to focus on developing more effective streamlined and joined processes. Delivery and accountability for this Early Help Strategy and the Early Help Performance framework will move from Sefton Safeguarding Board to the Early Help Partnership Group, a sub group of the Health and Well-being Board. The Board will also have oversight of:

- Each partner agency's response to implementation of this Strategy.
- Developing an effective outcome-based performance management and quality assurance framework to measure impact.

2. Establish easy to use Early Help online information and advice

In order to help children and their families and practitioners across the partnership to understand the wide range of information and services available we will build on the Sefton local offer website as a central portal to bring information together. This local offer website already provides

information, advice and guidance to the public on a range of family issues, including support from partner agencies. Other online websites, advice centres, telephone helplines or supports and services not linked, will be connected to this so that families and practitioners can access these.

3. Develop a suite of tools for early help practitioners to use – ensuring a whole family strength based consistent approach to working with children and families

To accompany the revised early help assessment and plan we will develop a suite of early help tools to assist practitioners to understand the child and family journey, consistently monitor and review children's progress, evaluate the impact of support and interventions offered to improve outcomes and how to measure a family's engagement and their satisfaction level.

4. Develop effective and timely processes for sharing information between agencies

To enable early help to be more effective and ensuring the right help, at the right time, we will work with partners to remove barriers to effective working and ensure that families don't need to have a series of assessments before receiving the support they need to. We will:

- Ensure we have in place clear information sharing arrangements
- Ensure we are making the best use of IT systems and portals across agencies and departments

5. Refresh structures and pathways that support the access to early help

The Early Help approach is embedded in the Assess-Plan-Review guidance for practitioners and is available to all practitioners through the Sefton Early Help website.

The Council's existing early help services have been realigned to localities and renamed to 'Family Wellbeing' creating a locality based, systemic, family key worker (casework) service to work with children and families deemed as intensive need under the continuum of need, including children deemed on the edge of escalation to statutory services and those stepped down from statutory services.

Parenting programmes will continue to be provided for practitioners working with children and families open to both statutory and early help services.

Locality based Early Help will continue to develop greater integration and alignment with communities and partner agencies, exploring co-location and/or coordination of processes with early years provisions, health, schools, children and adult substance misuse services and emotional and mental health services (those provided by voluntary, community and faith sectors).

This revised strategy also has key links with the approach for children with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Sefton Children with SEND should be supported at the most appropriate level for their needs at the earliest point when these become apparent. Early help supports this approach and enables coordinated early support for children with SEND and their families.

We will work with commissioners and providers to ensure that early help informs the interventions required in each locality and across the borough and that these are developed in accordance with need and ensuring impact.

The multi-agency Task and Finish Group will develop and agree clear pathways to support access to early help and ensure children, families and practitioners have clear information on how to access early help.

6. Develop a skilled and competent workforce across the partnership

Delivery of early help requires effective working between professionals and between services including an understanding of each other's role, responsibility, organisational culture and values. A lead worker forum will be launched to strengthen and enhance the Early Help offer, to build on the delivery of evidence-based practice. This includes:

- Awareness raising to ensure that the 'levels of need relating to risk' are clearly understood and communicated between professionals so that families can move between early help and specialist statutory services at the right time and when required.
- Information sharing and conversations between professionals to identify families who would benefit from early help.
- Implementing whole family approaches whilst keeping the child at the centre and undertaking strength-based assessments of families including effective engagement and conversations with children and their families.
- Holding and managing risk.
- Working with difficult to engage families.
- Embedding evidence-based approaches and interventions across the partnership – including sharing good practice and developing online resources for practitioners.
- Building relationships with and getting to know families.
- Reducing the number of 'hand-offs' and ensuring consistency of lead workers.

- Identifying and engage family support networks.
- Reflecting on their work with families and get different perspectives from managers and peers.
- Access training and learning opportunities to develop skills across the partnership.

The practice models include:

- Restorative based work across the children’s workforce building relationships with children, young people and their families.
- Family Group Conferencing in Early Help and Children’s Social Care.
- Motivational interviewing, focussing on strengths in the individual, and help them explore their own solutions to their behavioural issues.
- Understanding attachment and trauma informed practice across the workforce.
- Adverse Childhood Experiences training.

7. Develop a joint commissioning framework for early help

More joined up commissioning will achieve economies of scales savings and reduce duplication of services. The resources saved can be applied to any gaps in service delivery. This will include:

- Enabling, through established governance mechanisms, pooled resources to develop a broader joint commissioning framework across partner agencies to direct the commissioning intentions for early help whole family approaches and maximise best value.

- Develop an intelligence led approach to commissioning that draws together key public funding streams to develop a broader joint commissioning framework across partner agencies to direct the commissioning intentions for prevention and early help
- Ensure all stakeholders, including children and families, have a voice at every stage of the commissioning cycle and provide feedback to measure and review impact and enable redesigned services that better meet the needs of our children and families.



Conclusion

Our integrated strategy for early help builds on our previous achievements and takes us on a journey with families in Sefton to maximise their opportunities for the future. An implementation plan that supports it will help us to deliver success. Our early help journey will continue in partnership with statutory and voluntary partners, communities, and partnership with children, young people and their families.

Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2018

'A lead practitioner should undertake the assessment, provide help to the child and family, act as an advocate on their behalf and co-ordinate the delivery of support services. A GP, family support worker, school nurse, teacher, health visitor and/or special educational needs co-ordinator could undertake the lead practitioner role.'

