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1. Introduction

This Worcestershire Early help strategy outlines how partners and agencies across the county will work together to ensure there is an offer and delivery of help and support to children, young people and families living in Worcestershire. We all recognise the need to work collaboratively together to improve the lives and outcomes for children and young people whilst working with and supporting the adults in their lives who care and support them.

Keeping families together, thriving in their communities is at the heart of what we want to achieve. Enabling them to access the right help and support at the earliest opportunity if and when they need to form a range of agencies and support available to them.

2. What is Early help?

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026 states:



Early help is support for children of all ages that improves a family's resilience and outcomes or reduces the chance of a problem getting worse. It is not an individual service, but a system of support delivered by local authorities and their partners working together and taking a collective responsibility to provide the right provision in their area.

Some early help is provided through "universal services" such as education and health services. They are universal services because they are available to all families, regardless of their needs.

Other early help services are coordinated by a local authority and /or their partners to address specific concerns within a family and can be described as targeted early help. Examples of these include parenting support, mental health support, youth services, youth offending teams and housing and employment services.

Early help may be appropriate for children and families who have several needs, or whose circumstances might make them more vulnerable. It is a voluntary approach, requiring the family's consent to receive support and services offered. These may be provided before and/or after statutory intervention. (page 44)





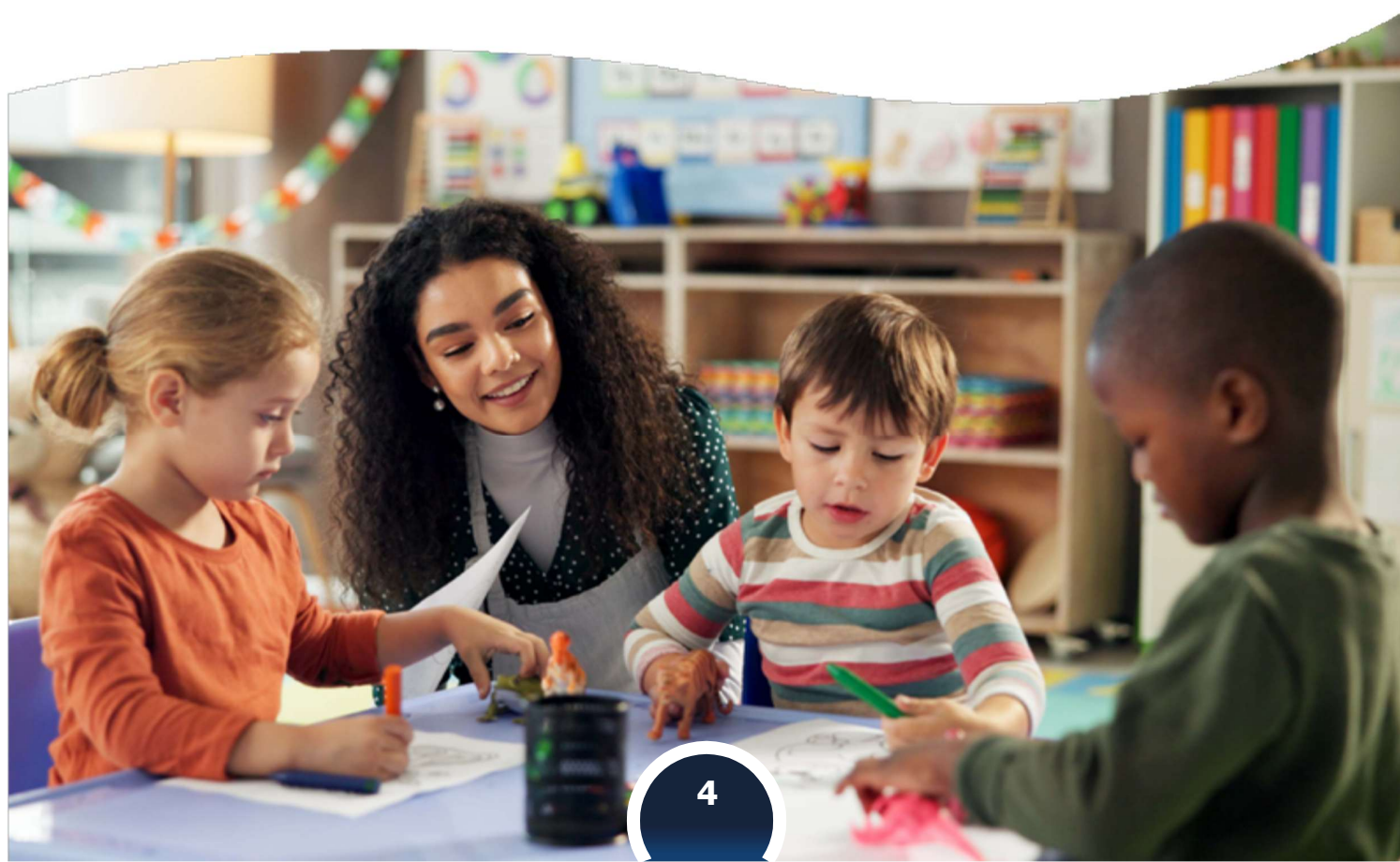
Early Help is about identifying needs within families early on, proactively offering preventative support before the problems become more complex or entrenched .

Those coming into contact with families all have a responsibility towards identifying emerging needs as early as possible and responding to them .

Support can be offered early in life or early on in the identification of a particular need which can arise at any point throughout childhood and adolescence . Early Help and support is available for families in Worcestershire with children and young people aged 0 to 18 .

Early help is everyone's responsibility, and it requires all those that come into contact with children, young people and their families to understand their role within Early Help . National research and evidence suggest that an early response is a more effective and efficient way of delivering services to children and young people . It is better for children, young people and their families for us to provide help and support when problems first emerge, rather than delivering a more costly statutory intervention when the needs have escalated .

This includes using services to reduce or prevent specific problems from getting worse or becoming entrenched . By working together in partnerships to deliver an Early Help offer we aim to reduce the demand upon our specialist and higher tier services e.g ., hospital admissions, police and ambulance call outs, mental health services, alternative educational provisions, adults and children's social care, prisons, youth justice remand centres, courts etc . This is in children and young people's best interests now and later in life .





3. Our ambition for children and young people in Worcestershire is:

-  Keeping children safe from harm (at home and in their communities)
-  Keep families together
-  Enabling children and young people to be healthy
-  Enjoy and achieve through learning and development
-  Prevention of crime and serious youth violence
-  Promote positive emotional health and wellbeing
-  Children and young people achieving their full potential
-  Children and young people are supported through adulthood.

To enable this to happen we want to ensure children, young people, and their families know where to go or who to talk to for help and support in Worcestershire; and they can access this in a range of ways e.g., online, over the phone, or via their local community workforce including family hubs at a time when they need it. As partners we recognise the diverse and changing needs of our communities and take account of this when planning and delivering services for children and young people.

We want to provide the best range of services and support to children and young people, which is easily accessed, ensuring children get the right service at the right time in their local communities.

We want to help and support children and young people to achieve their best and support those caring for them to do this.



4. Worcestershire's Early Help strategy aims:

Ensure we provide a whole family approach.

It is inclusive and diverse for children and young people.



Children, young people and their families are supported to make and sustain positive changes in their lives.

It promotes and supports children and young people being ambitious in what they can achieve and become.

Children and young people achieve their full potential and are supported through to adulthood.

It focuses on the right support at the right time.

The partnership workforce is engaged and proactive in its delivery.

It delivers a joined-up partnership approach to help and support.

It supports and is integrated within the work of wider strategies for children and young people in Worcestershire.

It ensures there are measures of effectiveness, impact and outcomes for children and young people.

We will use data and feedback from families to identify inequalities in access and improve outcomes for families.



5. Our Worcestershire Early Help principles:

Early Help can help children and young people to develop the skills they need to live happy, healthy, and successful lives. It can improve the quality of children's home lives and family relationships; increase educational attainment and support good mental health. Early years help and support in the first five years of life, it is an investment that can pay back for a lifetime and offers a chance to break into generational cycles of poor outcomes.

Children and families at the centre of what we do: Our workforce will focus on the quality of relationships with, and the quality of life for, families, not just managing risk and reducing harm. It means constructive partnership working between organisations voluntary schools' communities' children and families to provide personalised integrated whole family approach to support and making every relationship and contact count.

Family networks and community support. Early Help has the best chances of success where individuals, family networks and communities come together. Families feel well supported by those around them and the changes are often more sustainable. Families are enabled to identify their own solutions to what help and support they need and feel empowered.

Our Contextual Safeguarding approach helps us to understand and respond to wider risks that children and young people face outside their home in places and spaces including online, with their peers and in their communities.

Tackling the causes not symptoms. Sustainable positive change for children and their families depends upon preventing and tackling the causes of problems rather than seeking to deal with the presenting symptoms. Early Help and support attempts to identify and prevent the emergence or worsening of family challenges.

The signs of safety approach is Worcestershire's partnership strengths-based practice model. This provides us with a common language for how we engage both with families but also with each other. Having a common approach and language helps us identify, understand and communicate the strengths; worries and/or concerns to help us identify what needs to happen next. Recognising that families often have their own ideas and solutions to the challenges they face.

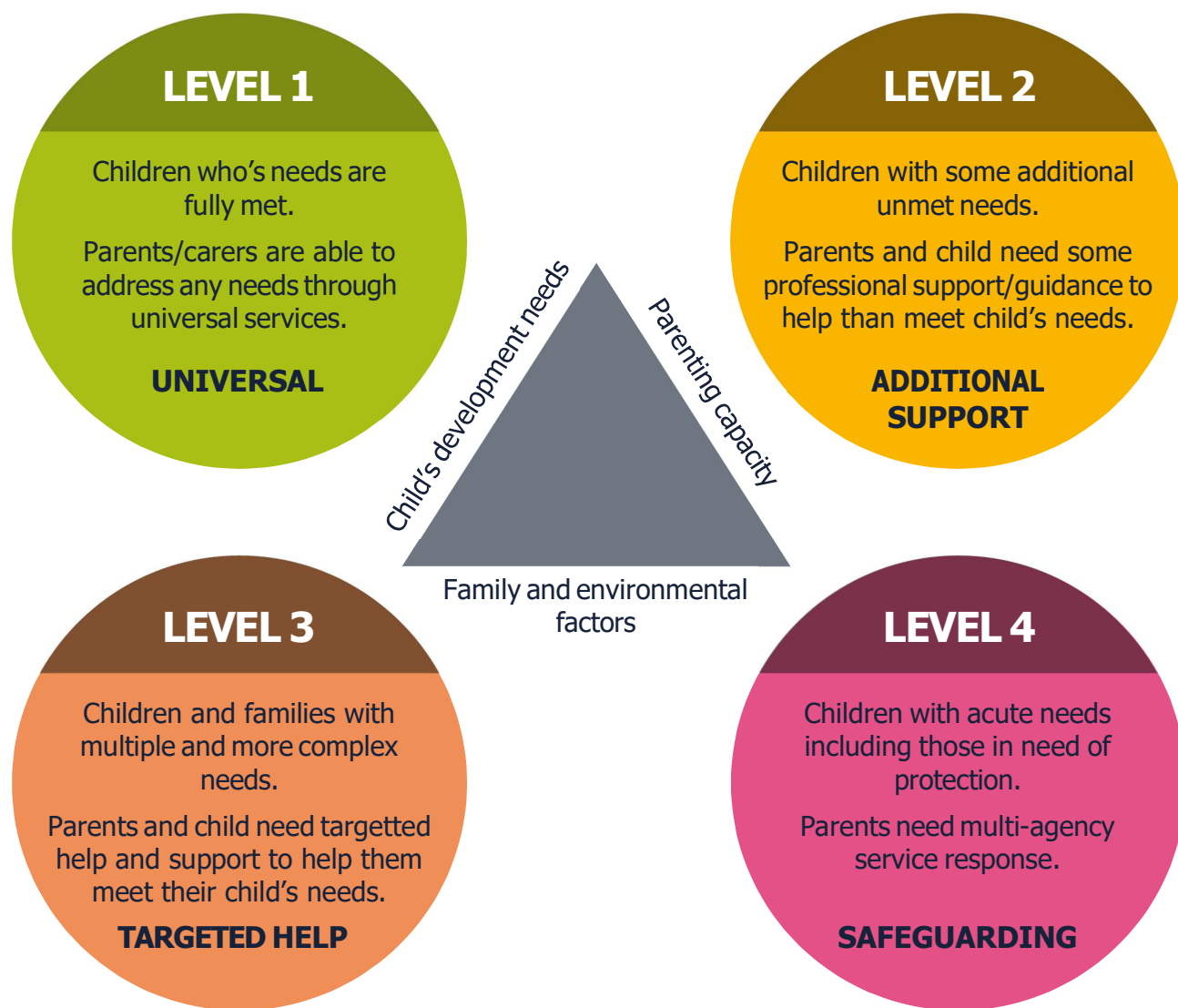
Early Help in Worcestershire is delivered in line with our Worcestershire levels of need guidance: Levels of Need Guidance (formerly Threshold Guidance) | Worcestershire County Council.

The continuum of need helps us to recognise that family's needs change and can increase or decrease. For most children and young people in Worcestershire they will only ever need to access universally available services such as education and health care, (level 1 needs, universal services).



But for some children and young people their needs will be different e.g., children with mental health or disabilities who may need services ongoingly or a certain time for them. The continuum of need is a model used to understand and show how the levels of need a child may have can go up and down with the provision of preventative Early Help and support:

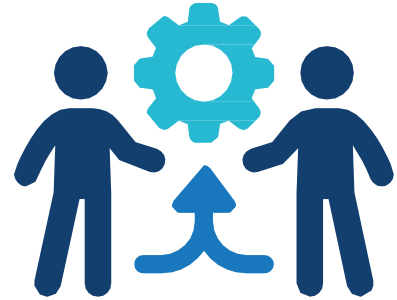
ADVICE, HELP AND SUPPORT





6. Early Help partnership collaboration and co-production

- X **Strengthening communities:** development of our local preventative and early help offers of help and support to families across the six Worcestershire districts.
- X **Independence and resilience:** Enabling families, children and young people from pre-birth to 18 years to achieve positive outcomes and access help and support when they need it. The right service at the right time in a range of ways.
- X **Relational:** Whole family approach to create sustainable change. Prioritising the quality of relationships between people that fosters development, learning and wellbeing that empowers families.
- X **Integration:** We will develop our partnership offer and approach in line with the Worcestershire levels of need guidance. Ensuring that the pathways between services is as seamless as possible and prevents families from repeating their story to multiple agencies and services.
- X **Targeted:** We will target resources to those at risk of the poorest outcomes and work as a network of services and partnerships to actively prevent the escalation of need and risk including those entering statutory and acute services.
- X **Evidence of impact:** Choosing interventions based on acknowledged evidence of what works and is accessible for our children, young people and their families. Identifying impact measures to ensure the Early Help offer is effective.
- X **Partnerships:** Using our partnerships and relationships to build resilience empowerment and build capacity within neighborhoods and communities.
- X **Enterprising:** To develop new partnerships and funding opportunities both nationally and local to enable new Early Help developments that are innovative and meet the ever-changing needs of children and young people.
- X **Developing our shared workforce:** We will collectively explore opportunities to develop our multi-disciplinary workforce together including where appropriate multi-agency training and learning events.
- X **Whole family working:** Our approaches will include wider family for children and young people recognising the importance of family and drawing on the child and young person's own network of support, helping to create sustained changes.





7. Our key priorities are:

1

Embed early help offers help and support across all agencies, partners and our workforce to enable families to access the right help and support when they need it at the earliest opportunity.

2

Our Worcestershire Early Help partnership works with the whole family and their network, recognising the diverse needs of our communities, supporting families to thrive.

3

Our partnership will develop opportunities for engagement, co-production and collaboration with families, so our offer of help and support is both accessible and achieves positive outcomes for families.

4

Ensuring families access to Early Help is seamless and well communicated without the need to be passed around agencies and for families to repeat their story.

5

The Worcestershire Early Help partnership will ensure our offer includes and reflects our national and local priorities.

6

Our shared early help partnership data sets will help us identify family's needs, patterns and trends so we can ensure information about help and support available to those families is widely promoted in those communities.

7

The Early Help Partnership will drive progress against this strategy and measure impact and outcomes through the Early Help Partnership action plan; this will ensure the Worcestershire Early Help offer is both accessible across the county to a wide range of families and has positive outcomes for families.





8. Governance and accountability

The delivery of the Early Help strategy was previously overseen by the Children and Young People's Partnership. This has now become embedded as business as usual as a well-established partnership. The partnership will report into Worcestershire's children's safeguarding executive board as requested and is a key partnership in the delivery of the Families First and Family Hub agenda.

This strategy has a multi-agency action plan driving and shaping its implementation and is reviewed and progressed by the Early Help partnership in the quarterly meetings.

For further information:

[!\[\]\(30072721fe92392a2d7c953be68f714a_img.jpg\) Early Help Guidance for families | Worcestershire County Council](#)

[!\[\]\(3b71157eab31889e641f7620692f0b92_img.jpg\) Early Help guidance for families and professionals | Worcestershire County Council](#)

[!\[\]\(4d25d87d94191bbe34f0046ad604e903_img.jpg\) Virtual Family Hub | Worcestershire County Council](#)





APPENDIX 1 – Glossary of terms in Early Help:

Early Help and Early Intervention:

is language that is used to describe the process of identifying and intervening as soon as possible with families to help prevent issues from happening or escalating. This may be due to a specific need, incident(s) or vulnerability.

Early Help Assessment: A voluntary assessment undertaken by any professional or agency in contact with a child or their family. It is designed to identify needs at an early stage and enable suitable help and support to be put in place to address the identified needs. Worcestershire has an Early Help assessment which can be used by any agency, or an agency may have their own which they use.

Early Help plan: this follows the Early Help assessment when the needs of the child and their family has been identified and this plan outlines what needs to happen and what help, and support is available by whom and when. This allows us to review how things are going and anything we need to change and can involve the wider extended family.

Early Help review / Team around the family meeting: both used to describe the meeting that reviews how the plan is working and agrees next steps or amendments.

Early Help closure: This is the closure record that captures the impact and outcomes achieved by the family and what support was offered and how it made a difference.

Early Years: refers to children aged from 0-5 years of age.

Early years provider: relates to early education places for children under 5 years of age. This includes state – funded and private nurseries as well as childminders.

Education, Health and Care Plan

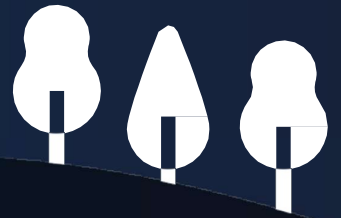
(EHC plan): This plan details the education, health and social care support that is to be provided to a child or young person who has special educational needs or a disability.

Graduated approach: A model of action, an intervention in early education settings, schools and colleges to help children and young people who have special educational needs. The approach recognises that there is a continuum of special educational needs.

The Local Offer: Local authorities in England are required to set out their local offer information about provision they expect to be available across education health and social care for children and young people in their area who have special educational needs or are disabled, including those who do not have education health and care plans. Local authorities must consult locally on what provisions are for the local offer.

Signs of Safety: This is an approach used in Worcestershire which is strengths based and enables families to help identify their own solutions to the challenges they face.

For more information go to the Early Help website at: **The Family Hub**



WORCESTERSHIRE
**EARLY HELP
PARTNERSHIP**

