

# Leicestershire Early Help Strategy

- a Partnership Approach



## Foreword



I am proud to write the foreword to our Early Help Strategy as it is a testament to the power of partnership and collaboration and our commitment to our families across Leicestershire. With a diverse range of stakeholders, including the VRN, Police, health services, the voluntary sector, Leicestershire district, borough and County Councils, educational institutions, adult social care, and probation services, we are forging a robust alliance across Leicestershire to ensure we have an effective early help system. It is ambitious, but recognises that the earliest help and prevention must be at

the forefront of our minds when we discuss, design and develop our partnership and networks for our families.

Our united goal is to enhance the life chances of all children and young people in Leicestershire. We are dedicated to continuous improvement and innovation, with a particular emphasis on ensuring that support is accessible when and where it is needed, without barriers or wrong front doors. Through working in partnership and the provision of family hubs, having the right information available, signposting effectively and ensuring support is available at the right time and place our families will be have the help and support they need. We are proud of the success of our family hubs and will continue to enhance and expand this offer.

We will continue to develop the concept and practice of early help assessment across our partnership with and in recognition of our near neighbours across LLR. We will embracing a data-informed approach, by sharing our data to improve our understanding of need, performance and quality whilst ensuring a positive experience for the families we interact with. Through this we aim to deepen our understanding of the community's needs and elevate the standard of our collective performance and service quality.

This strategy is not just a plan of action, but a commitment to the future of our community's youngest members.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julia Smith'.

Julia Smith  
Chief Executive, Blaby District Council  
Chair of the Leicestershire Early Help Partnership

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# 1. What is early help?

Early Help is a shared approach to strengthening resilience and improving outcomes for children and families. Helping early is about providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life.

# 2. Our Partnership Vision

Leicestershire Early Help Partnership is a multi-agency partnership made up of organisations working together to support families across the county. The Partnership understands that the provision of early help is a shared responsibility, and that to maximise effectiveness we must work collaboratively across services, agencies and communities, ensuring services are coordinated and understood to be interdependent.

We commit to working together so that families receive the holistic early help needed in a timely way and we will strive to ensure there is no wrong door for families.

- We will support and develop the early help workforce to provide respectful, inclusive services which build on family strengths to build resilience and use evidence informed approaches to reach the best outcomes for children.
- We will focus on building and developing connections and resources in communities and neighbourhoods and ensuring that the Partnership is responsive to local need and listens to the voice of children, families and communities.
- Our commitment to prevention will keep children and young people safe and well which will therefore reduce the demand on acute services.
- We will understand our collective impact through the sharing of data and outcomes.



### 3. Why is early help important?

Early help is about both providing help early in a problem, but also providing help early in a child's life. There is a huge amount of evidence that tells us that the first 1001 days of a child's life are critical in terms of baby brain development. Starting a family can be a time of great stress for many families and it is important that families can access the information, advice and where needed support to ensure all children have the best start in life. But we also know that difficulties can start at any point in a child's life. Providing support to families earlier in the development of a worry, difficulty or problem can help to avoid problems from becoming worse and possibly needing a greater level of intervention. This is better for families and better for services. Early help services will always seek to build on family strengths and enable families to build their resilience in dealing with life's ups and downs.

# 4. Who is responsible for delivering early help?

Early help is not one individual service but is a way of working together with children and families to provide support as it is needed. Providing early help is the responsibility of a wide range of organisations across Leicestershire and this includes local authorities, schools and colleges, health services, police, voluntary and community sector. Early help works best when organisations work together and take a ‘whole family’ approach. This is sometimes referred to as ‘the early help system’. The picture below illustrates what the system could look like, it is not intended as an exhaustive list of services.

## Early Help System



**Working Together to Safeguard Children** is the statutory guidance for inter-agency working to safeguard children and promote their welfare. The guidance states that Early help is not an individual service, but a system of support delivered by local authorities and their partners working together and taking collective responsibility to provide the right provision in their area.

Effective provision 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 which considers the needs of all members of the family
  - Ensure good ongoing communication, for example, through regular meetings between practitioners who are working with the family
  - Co-ordinate and/or provide support as part of a plan to improve outcomes. The plan will be designed together with the child and family and updated as and when the child and family needs change.
  - Engage effectively with families and their family network, making use of family group decision-making, to help meet the needs of the child.

A lead practitioner should co-ordinate the activity around the family, ensure the assessment and the family plan responds to all needs identified, and lead on ensuring the family co-produce the plan. The plan might include the family network. The time commitment to deliver this role will vary family by family depending on the complexity of their needs.

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2)

In December 2022 the Home Office published Statutory Guidance for the **Serious Violence Duty** placed on local areas. The guidance ensures relevant services work together to share information, target interventions and collaborate and plan to prevent and reduce serious violence within their local communities.

Professionals working in universal services are often best placed to identify children and families who are likely to be at risk of poor outcomes. This includes schools, public health nurses (health visiting and school nursing), early years settings, etc.



## 5. Early Help Assessment (EHA)

Early Help Assessment is a simple way of working with a family to understand the difficulties they are experiencing, recording the information in a simple format that can be shared with the family, and developing a plan together of who is going to do what to help the family to make progress. Any organisation can complete an early help assessment, and if after working with the family on the agreed plan it is felt more help is needed, with the family's agreement, the assessment and plan can be shared to include other organisations who may also be able to help. This could then be a 'Team Around the Family' arrangement where organisations and families work together on the same plan, and often one person from one agency will take responsibility for coordinating the plan. They might be referred to as the lead professional.

Working together in this way helps to make sure that everyone has the same understanding of the situation and information can be shared appropriately to support good outcomes for the children. When all agencies are using early help assessment it can often mean that the agency with greatest contact and therefore knowledge of the family is the lead professional. Often, this is likely to be a school. Early help assessments completed by schools are a good way for the family to understand the holistic support being provided to them and can see what is expected of them in the plan.

### **Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023 (Department for Education)**

*"58. If early help is appropriate, the designated safeguarding lead (or deputy) will generally lead on liaising with other agencies and setting up an inter-agency assessment as appropriate. Staff may be required to support other agencies and professionals in an early help assessment, in some cases acting as the lead practitioner. Any such cases should be kept under constant review and consideration given to a referral to local authority children's social care for assessment for statutory services if the child's situation does not appear to be improving or is getting worse."*

The provision of early help services is across a continuum of need and families may fluctuate in the amount of support needed. The Leicestershire Thresholds for Access to Services document provides guidance for Leicestershire practitioners on appropriate levels of referral. <https://lrsb.org.uk/uploads/view-the-llr-scp-thresholds-for-access-to-services-for-children-and-families-in-leicester-leicestershire-rutland.pdf>



## 6. Our Partnership priorities

The Early Help Partnership is responsible for the delivery of Priority 3 within the Children and Families Partnership Plan: Support Families to be Self Sufficient and Resilient. Under this heading, the partnership has identified 3 major strands of work for 2023-25:

### Family Hubs

Under this heading the work identified includes:

- Development of this strategy, implementation of Family Hubs including website, publication of Start for Life offer, workforce development plan and early help competency framework, promotion of the early help assessment process with all partners. Also included, the Reducing Parental Conflict programme and Supporting Families programme providing intensive support to more complex families.



### Voice, equity, and influence

Under this heading the work identified includes:

- Developing a mechanism to ensure the voice of families is heard at strategic partnership level, adoption of the Lundy model for engagement, ensuring we hear the voices of those we do not usually reach

### Data and Information

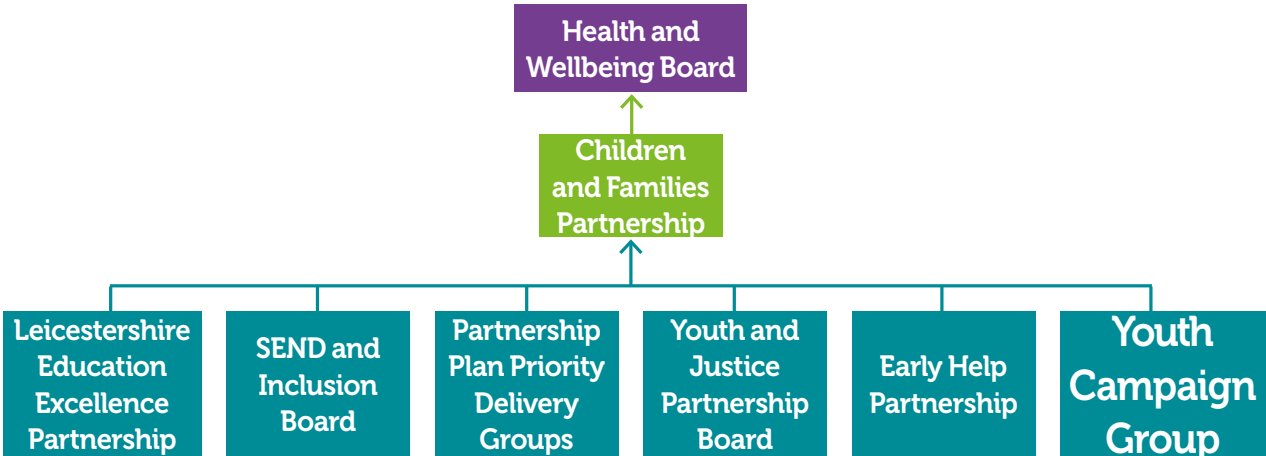
- Ensure up to date and comprehensive data sharing agreement is in place, work together to identify useful data sets across the partnership to help inform planning, explore potential for developing further vulnerability data sets to support identification of need.

The delivery of the above priorities is achieved through a blend of task and finish groups, lead officers, and subgroups of the Early Help Partnership. For example, the Core Development Group is a subgroup of the Partnership and is responsible for delivering the Reducing Parental Conflict programme.



This strategy and linked action plan is closely aligned to the Maternity and Early Years strategy and action plan which is delivered through the Priority One Group of the Children and Families Partnership. There are shared and linked actions across both action plans, for example Family Hubs and workforce development.

The diagram below shows the governance structure for the Early Help Partnership through to the Health and Wellbeing Board.



The Early Help Partnership is responsible for delivery of Priority 3 of the Children and Families Partnership Plan, Support Families to be Self Sufficient and Resilient. Additionally, the Early Help Partnership contributes to the delivery of Priority 1, Ensure the Best Start for Life (Early Years).

The Children and Families Partnership contributes to the delivery of the following strategic priorities for the Health and Wellbeing Board:

- Best Start for Life: First 1001 Critical Days
- School Readiness
- Preparing for Life

list of all the members.



