



CUMBRIA EARLY HELP PARTNERSHIP STRATEGY

2020 – 2023

Cumbria
Children's trust

Cumbria Safeguarding
Children Partnership



“As the Chair of the Children’s Trust Board and the Director for People in Cumbria – I am proud and honoured to be presenting to you – the Early Help Strategy for Cumbria. I firmly believe that Our Vision.... “In Cumbria all children will be part of a strong family network living in a thriving community being happy and healthy and able to succeed with a sense of pride” describes a Cumbria that our children and young people recognise and want to be part of.

We know that we are not at the start of this journey as this is our second Early Help strategy and I feel that this strategy really captures the voice of practitioners from across the partnership (both Cumbria Safeguarding Children’s Partnership and the Children’s Trust Board) and it demonstrates the development of our approach particularly around our commitment to Think Family. This requires us to work holistically with families in communities, and schools, based on relationships and collaborative working, through early identification and intervention.

The coronavirus pandemic has had a significant impact on children and young people’s lived experience. Although it appears to pose a lower risk of infection to children and young people, we are now seeing the emergence of the secondary impacts of the pandemic on their mental health and emotional wellbeing as well as disruption to education and schooling. For many children it has compromised the support that they receive from family and friends and has increased the hidden harms that can impact so much on children’s lives particularly in relation to parental mental health, domestic abuse and substance misuse. In addition, we are

seeing some newly vulnerable families as the economic impacts of the pandemic are beginning to materialise. As a partnership we recognise the damaging impact of poverty on the lives of children and their families, we understand that poverty is often a cause of a family’s needs and difficulties and not just a co-existing factor.

This strategy describes how we will work together across the partnership to provide help and support to children and families earlier – using our Think Family Approach. We will provide wrap around support for schools to enable them to provide Early Help more quickly and simply.

There is no doubt that all communities and every aspect of public services have been affected by coronavirus. This strategy emphasis how we will focus on the causes and not just the symptoms. Earlier recognition of underlying issues will provide a holistic response much earlier in children’s lives.

As a leader, I will support and champion the Early Help Strategy and the Think Family Approach. As Chair of the CTB, I will ensure we implement the strategy and develop a joined up collaborative approach by working with transparency and honesty across the system.

As we enter 2021 we are going through a significant period of change and I am confident that by working together we can succeed in our vision for children, young people and their families.”



John Readman
December 2020

““As the Chair of Cumbria Safeguarding Children Partnership, I fully endorse the Early Help Partnership Strategy. Prioritising Early Help is the only way forward, all of our agencies want to help to avoid any escalation in problems and help as early as we can. We have so many committed and dedicated staff in Cumbria working to do this everyday. It takes a community to help raise a child and it is crucial that we all across the Cumbria Childrens Trust Board and the Cumbria Safeguarding Children Partnership work together to collectively help communities to become stronger and more connected to enable them to support themselves and each other. ”



Gill Rigg
Independent chair of the CSCP.
December 2020



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What is Early Help?

'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018' statutory guidance re-emphasises the crucial role of effective Early Help and focusses on the collective responsibility of all agencies to identify, assess and provide effective Early Help services and states:

'Providing Early Help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later. Early Help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life, from the foundation years through to the teenage years. Early Help can also prevent further problems arising, for example, if it is provided as part of a support plan where a child has returned home to their family from care.'

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

**Working Together to Safeguard Children, HM Government, 2018*

Without Early Help, family problems can become complex and serious, sometimes leading to child safety concerns, and the need for statutory children's social care intervention.



Why is Early Help Important?

In addition to the statutory guidance, a number of national reviews have identified a growing body of evidence on the effectiveness of Early Help for children and their families. These include:

The Munro Review of Child Protection: A child-centred system. Professor Eileen Munro

The arguments for Early Help are three-fold. First there is the moral argument for minimising adverse experiences for children and young people. Secondly, there is the argument of 'now or never' arising from the evidence of how difficult it is to reverse damage to children and young people's development. The third argument is that it is cost-effective when current expenditure is compared with estimated expenditure if serious problems develop later. From this review's point of view the three key messages are that:

- Preventative services will do more to reduce abuse and neglect than reactive services;
- Coordination of services is important to maximise efficiency; and
- Within preventative services, there need to be good mechanisms for helping people identify those children and young people who are suffering or likely to suffer harm from abuse or neglect and who need referral to children's social care.

Health Equity In England: The Marmot Review 10 Years On

In the 2010 Marmot Review, Fair Society Healthy Lives, the report set out 6 areas, which covered stages of life, healthy standard of living, communities and places and ill health prevention. These formed the basis for six priority objectives and areas of recommendations:

- Give every child the best start in life.
- Enable all children, young people and adults to maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives.
- Create fair employment and good work for all.
- Ensure a healthy standard of living for all.
- Create and develop healthy and sustainable places and communities.
- Strengthen the role and impact of ill health prevention.

Ten years since the publication of The Marmot Review, the Marmot report suggests that for the first time in more than 100 years life expectancy has failed to increase across the country, and for the poorest 10% of women it has actually declined. Over the last decade health inequalities have widened overall, and the amount of time people spend in poor health has increased since 2010.

Marmot 2020 confirms an increase in the north/south health gap, where the largest decreases were seen in the most deprived 10% of neighbourhoods in the North East, and the largest increases in the least deprived 10% of neighbourhoods in London.

Key Points: The more deprived the area, the shorter the life expectancy. This social gradient has become steeper over the last decade, and it is women in the most deprived 10% of areas for whom life expectancy fell from 2010-12 and 2016-18.

There are marked regional differences in life expectancy, particularly among people living in more deprived areas.

Mortality rates are increasing for men and women aged 45-49 – perhaps related to so-called 'deaths of despair' (suicide, drugs and alcohol abuse) as seen in the USA.

Child poverty has increased (22% compared to Europe's lowest of 10% in Norway, Iceland and The Netherlands); children's and youth centres have closed; funding for education is down.

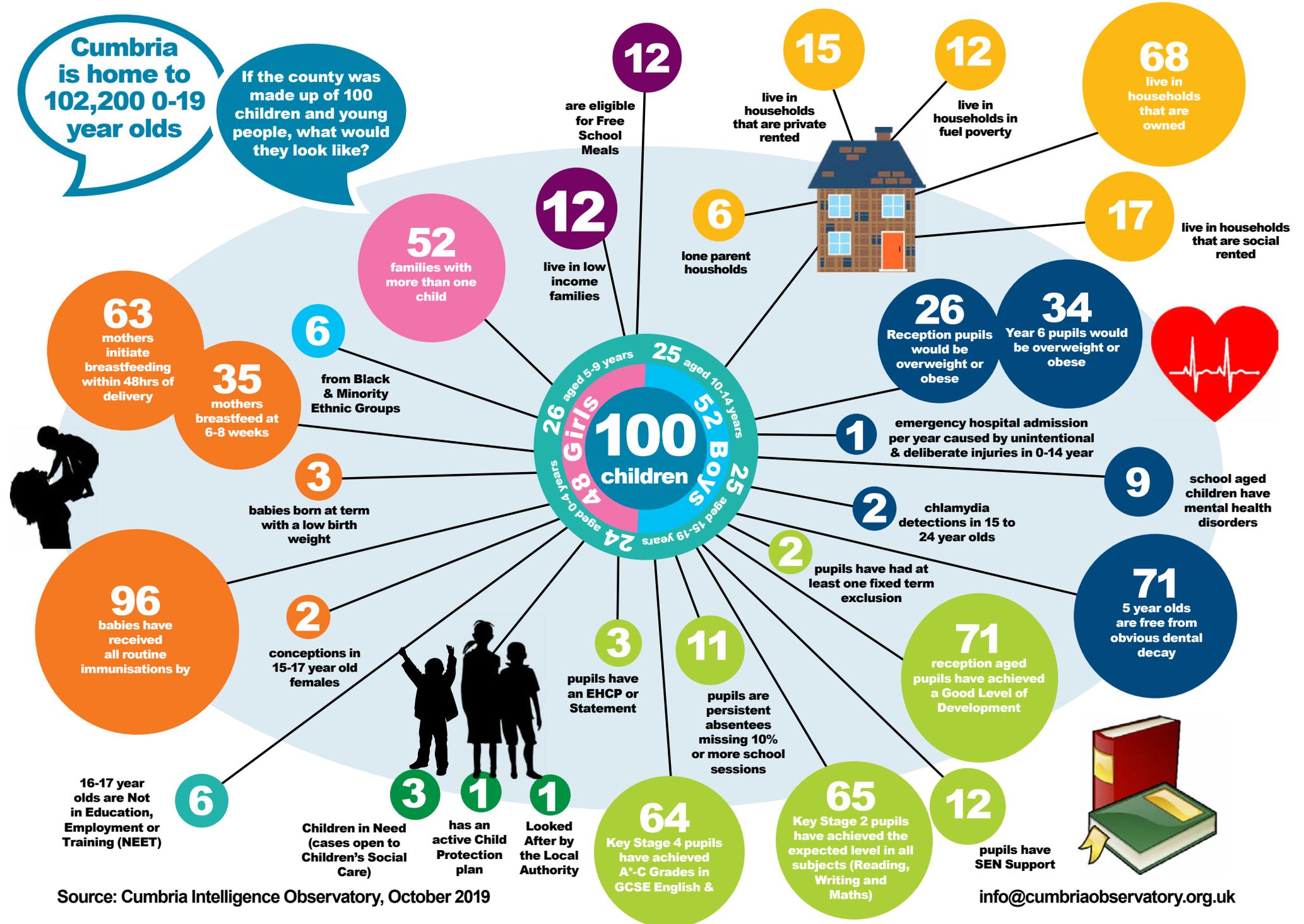
There is a housing crisis and a rise in homelessness; people have insufficient money to lead a healthy life; and there are more ignored communities with poor conditions and little reason for hope.

Health equity in England: the marmot review 10 years on:

www.instituteofhealthequity.org/the-marmot-review-10-years-on

Cumbria is home to 102,200 0-19 year olds

If the county was made up of 100 children and young people, what would they look like?



Source: Cumbria Intelligence Observatory, October 2019

info@cumbriaobservatory.org.uk

In Cumbria all children will be a part of a strong family network living in a thriving community being happy and healthy and able to succeed with a sense of pride

'Early Help is defined as the total support that improves a family's resilience and outcomes or reduces the chance of a problem getting worse. The vision looks at the Early Help system from the point of view of families, communities, people in the diverse workforce, and leaders.'

1. I trust the professionals working with me and my family – they understand us better

2. We only tell our story once. I get offered help much earlier now and everyone works together. There is someone in my life listening to and caring for me and my family, and appreciating our strengths

3. I set the outcomes in my family plan with my local worker. I know how to improve our lives, navigate the system and get support if there are problems. Improving outcomes make a difference to our lives

4. When things get tough, I know the relationships I have with my friends and community will help me

FAMILIES

Early Help is the total support that improves a family's resilience and outcomes or reduces the chance of a problem getting worse

COMMUNITIES

1. In my community and networks, people know each other better and look out for how they can help

2. Our community and public services agreed to work together to promote and develop community resources, spaces and activity

3. There are local projects and groups in our neighbourhood connected to family support services. Businesses play an important role in the community

4. We help to design our local services. Any work with my community or family is done in partnership

FAMILY OUTCOMES

1. Local leaders trust each and share responsibility to improve all outcomes for the place and population across the life course, with evidence and quality assurance of collective impact

2. Trust is underpinned by governance with shared responsibilities, e.g. Combined Authority, Public Service Board, Alliances

3. Local coordination of the family support system ensures needs are met, often matchmaking between demand and local resources and assets

4. There is an ambitious strategy that is transforming the local families support system and reducing demand to acute services. Prevention focussed initiatives are coordinated and seen as interdependent, such as crime, serious violence, child poverty, obesity, integrated communities

LEADERS

WORKFORCE

1. There is a professional family support service. Whole family working is the norm for all people-facing public services through a shared practice model. And early help and family support is seen as everyone's responsibility

2. Public services work together in integrated hubs based in the community with a common footprint

3. Universal services such as schools and nurseries are supported to help local families and vulnerable people, with access to intelligence and common case management across the early help system

4. Data sharing across partners enables joint intelligence and risk-based analysis of families' needs, including finding and offering support to families with hidden needs

(Early Help System Guide. A toolkit to assist local strategic partnerships responsible for their Early Help System. Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government)

In Cumbria we know what good Early Help looks like. In 2019 Cumbria Safeguarding Children Partnership held a series of consultation events around the County entitled 'Developing Excellent Early Help'. 276 professionals attended and these are some examples of what they told us excellent Early Help is:

- A joined up collaborative approach of working with transparency and honesty
- Easily accessible and promoted well so people know about it and how to access it
- The right help at the right time with timely interventions following a quality assessment
- Practical support available which develops resilience in families
- Children are at the centre of the family not the centre of the services

The fundamental purpose of this Early Help Partnership Strategy is to create a system in which vulnerable children and families are identified and engaged with at the earliest point, so that their needs do not escalate to requiring a statutory intervention.

About the Strategy

This strategy sets out our ambition for Early Help across Cumbria, describing how partners will work together to strategically plan and deliver services, outlining:

- The support to be provided to ensure that services are working together effectively
- How we will keep children & families at the centre of our services
- How we will deliver Early Help and support at the earliest opportunity
- How we will know that the Early Help is working

Particular groups of children and young people are known to be at greater risk of poor outcomes. Working Together 2018 sets out a list of vulnerabilities that practitioners should be particularly alert to. This is any child who:

- Is disabled and has specific additional needs
- Has special educational needs (whether or not they have a statutory Education, Health and Care Plan)

- Is a young carer
- Is showing signs of being drawn into anti-social or criminal behaviour, including gang involvement and association with organised crime groups
- Is frequently missing/goes missing from care or from home
- Is at risk of modern slavery, trafficking or exploitation
- Is at risk of being radicalised or exploited
- Is in a family circumstance presenting challenges for the child, such as drug and alcohol misuse, adult mental health issues and domestic abuse
- Is misusing drugs or alcohol themselves
- Has returned home to their family from care
- Is a privately fostered child
- Has a parent/carer in custody



Our strategic priorities

This strategy will create a shared approach to meeting enhanced need across the wider children's workforce and The Children's partnership Board and the Children's Safeguarding partnership recognise the need to support agencies to develop the skills and expertise in this shared approach. Just as this strategy creates and endorses a principle of working 'with' families, not 'doing to' it establishes the foundation of the Cumbria Safeguarding Children Partnership working together with Cumbria Children's Trust Board to facilitate a shared approach.

Our shared approach throughout all of our priorities is 'Think Family'.

Our strategic priorities are:

- Thriving communities and families
- Give children the best start in life
- The right help at the right time
- Earlier identification and intervention with families to prevent their needs from increasing

Think family ... Our approach

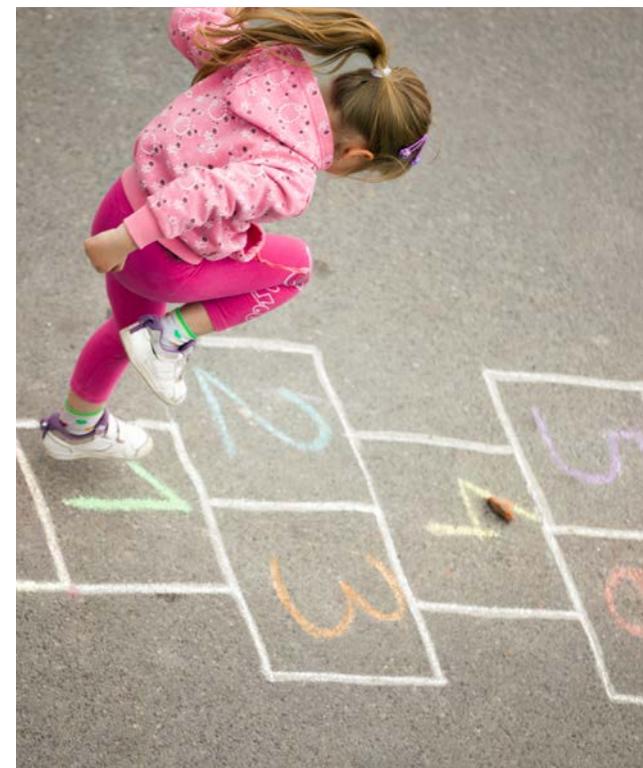
The Think Family agenda recognises and promotes the importance of a whole-family approach which is built on the principles of 'Reaching out: think family':

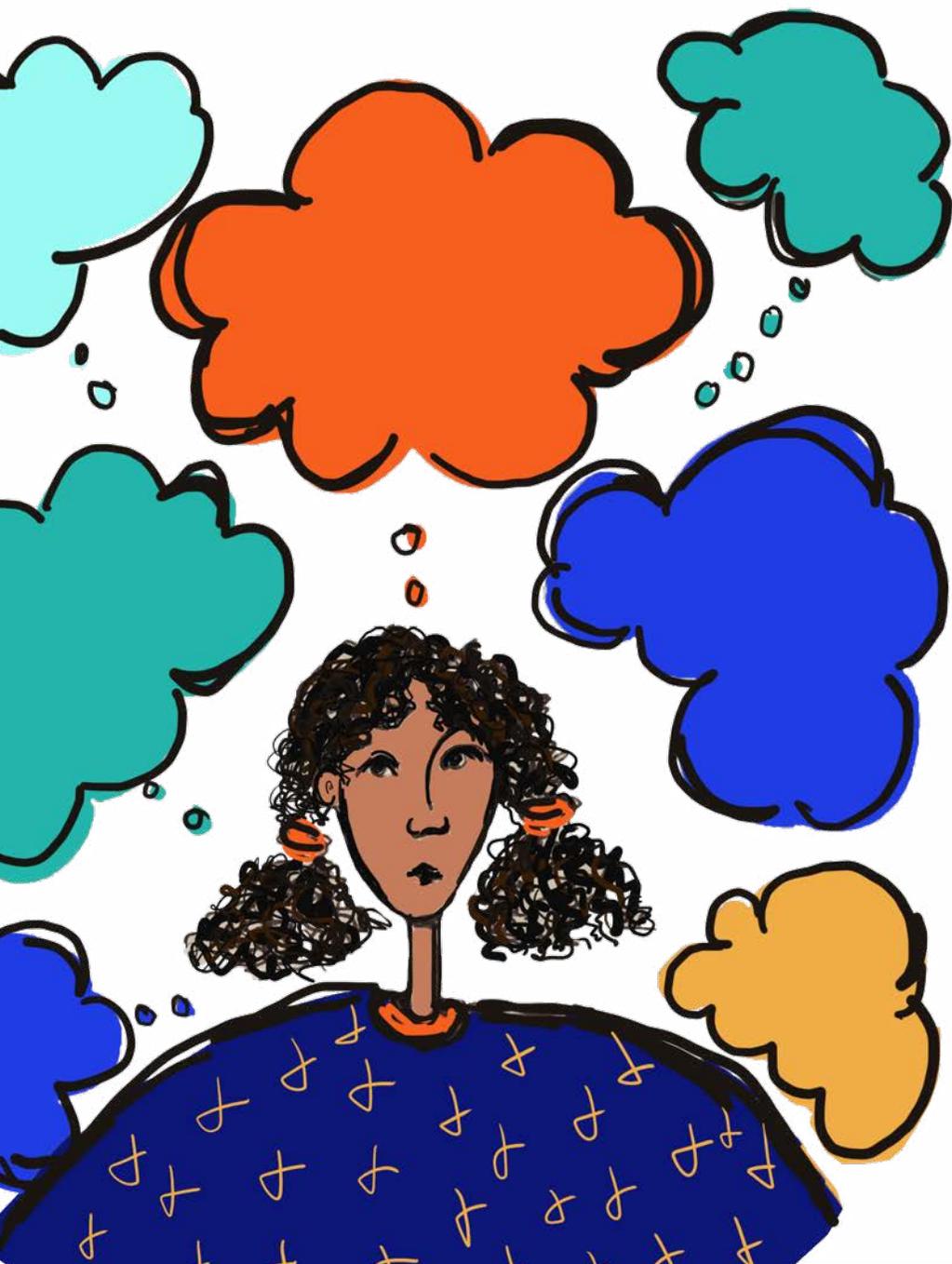
- No wrong door – contact with any service offers an open door into a system of joined-up support. This is based on more coordination between adult and children's services.

- Looking at the whole family – services working with both adults and children take into account family circumstances and responsibilities. For example, an alcohol treatment service combines treatment with parenting classes while supervised childcare is provided for the children.
- Providing support tailored to need – working with families to agree a package of support best suited to their particular situation.
- Building on family strengths – practitioners work in partnerships with families recognising and promoting resilience and helping them to build their capabilities. For example, family group conferencing is used to empower a family to negotiate their own solution to a problem.

This means thinking about the child, the parent and the family, with adult and children's health and social care services working together to consider the needs of the individual in the context of their relationships and their environment. It should thus provide the optimum service that makes the best of what specialist training, knowledge and support is on offer. 'Think parent, think child, think family' is therefore the guiding principle for this strategy.

SCIE (2009) Think child, think parent, think family: a guide to parental mental health and child welfare, London: SCIE.





In Cumbria we use the Early Help Assessment - Signs of Well-being and Success to ensure that children, young people and their families get the right help at the right time. An Early Help Assessment - Signs of Well-being and Success is a way of working, it is voluntary and needs consent from the parent/carers or where appropriate the young person.

A good quality assessment and plan needs to be used at the earliest point to target support that will make a difference to the lives of children and their families.

Any practitioner can complete an Early Help Assessment - Signs of Well-being and Success with a child, young person and family. You would use the Early Help Assessment - Signs of Well-being and Success when there are concerns about the progress or well-being of a child or young person, if their needs are not clear and are not being met and when the needs are wider than your own service can address.

The Early Help Assessment - Signs of Well-being and Success is the tool for a practitioner to assess, plan and review support to meet a child/rens identified needs and goals. A Team around the Family (TAF) is developed which includes the family where information can be shared and responds appropriately to a child and family's needs.

The family must be involved in the assessment and encouraged to work in partnership with agencies to achieve the wellbeing and success goals set within the Early Help Assessment - Signs of Well-being and Success Plan.

In Cumbria the Early Help Assessment - Signs of Well-being and Success has been developed using Signs of Wellbeing and Success, which is developed from Signs of Safety. It is a consistent strengths based approach, using common language and a full assessment of a child and family's needs. The assessment will explore - What is working well /strengths for the child/ren and their family? What are we worried /concerned about? And what will wellbeing and success look like?

Guidance and the Early Help Assessment - Signs of Well-being and Success can be found [here](#).

Think Family for effective Early Help Assessment

The 'Continuum of Need' is based on the needs of children and families, rather than what a service has to offer. Through this person centered needs led model, we will be able to identify the right support, at the right time for families. The model is built on a strength-based approach, which looks for opportunities to support and build on a family's existing strengths and capacities to address their needs, as opposed to focusing on the worry or concern. By identifying what works well for the family, strategies can be developed to help build their resilience which helps them to move towards Thriving.

A family can move within the Continuum of Need and can access support at any point. Some families may enter the model at 'Getting More Help' as they may not have gone through previous sections to get to this point. Some families may be receiving statutory services, for example through an EHCP or a CIN plan, and may still have needs at an Early Help level, which would be part of this Continuum of Need.

Meaningful Conversations

To ensure there is a good quality assessment there needs to be the gathering and analysis of information which will identify what is working well/strengths and worries of the children and family.

In gathering the information for the Early Help Assessment it is important to have a meaningful conversation with the child and family. This will enable both the child and family's voice and wishes be heard to inform the assessment and plan.

The conversation with the child and family needs to be based on trust and practitioners need to develop a relationship with the child and family. The conversation needs to use a questioning approach to enable practitioners understand the family's needs. Practitioners can still share their thoughts but we need to remember not to go into telling approach. Practitioners need to gather information from the conversation that is accurate, clear, evidence based, inclusive, professional and a conversation that will develop a solution that is practicable for the child and family.

Early Help continuum of need

The provision of Early Help services will form part of a continuum of support to respond to the different needs of children and families



Thriving:
Families who can achieve positive outcomes independently or with minimal professional support beyond universal services

Getting Help:
Families who have additional needs and are just coping; able to achieve positive outcomes with some support

Getting More Help:
Families who are struggling to cope and need a targeted response; risk of stepping up to Child In Need without more intensive support

Statutory Intervention: Families who are not coping and who need statutory intervention for support or safeguarding

Early Help is everyone's responsibility

The diagram below demonstrates how the Early Help System available to children and their families is defined under three headings. These combine in different ways to form a local area's Early Help offer. These are 'universal services' 'community support' and 'acute and targeted services'.



(Early Help System Guide. A toolkit to assist local strategic partnerships responsible for their Early Help System. Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.)

Our Early Help offer reflects that children live in family networks; it recognises the crucial role that all family members (mothers, fathers, step-parents, grandparents, siblings and other extended family members and carers) play in influencing what children experience, and achieve, as well as the consequences when families experience difficulty.

Central to our Early Help offer is:

- The early identification of children and families who would benefit from early help
- A co-ordinated early help assessment
- Support and interventions to prevent abuse and neglect of children and young people, leading to improved outcomes for children and families as a whole

Our Early Help offer therefore puts the responsibility on all professionals to identify emerging problems and potential unmet needs for individual children and their families, irrespective of whether they are providing services to children or adults.

Professional Team around the School

Embedded within this strategy is the professional team around the school, this is to offer support to schools from professionals who can support them, where necessary and make contact with families if needed. It provides the infrastructure for agencies to continue to work together to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families.

Principles of the Team around the School:

- Work together to coordinate a range of support and services to ensure the needs of children and families are met
- To support schools to coordinate a plan to meet the child and family's needs
- To provide advice and consultation where appropriate
- Prioritise support and avoid duplication

SEND support is embedded within the Early Help process

When an additional need is identified for a child or young person, whether social, emotional, developmental or educational, an Early Help Assessment Signs of Well-being and Success can be started to gather information. The emphasis is on assessing all aspects of a child or young person's strengths, needs and circumstances, developing a plan to meet identified needs and reviewing progress systematically.

The Early Help Assessment Signs of Well-being and Success will be essential for:

- SENCOs following the 'Graduated Response' outlined in the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Code of Practice (DfE 2015)
- Recording evidence of high quality teaching and SEN support in schools and settings using the information and advice set out in Bands 1 and 2 of the Cumbria SEND Handbook localoffer.cumbria.gov.uk/kb5/cumbria/fsd/site.page?id=77U6TWfBAnU





0-19 Healthy Child Programme and 0-19 Child and Family Support Services

One of the most important parts of our improvement journey is making sure Early Help in Cumbria supports children, young people and families to develop resilience and independence. We can do this by supporting them to build on their strengths and help them to find their own solutions and take responsibility for their future and that of their children.

To make sure children, families and young people get the right help, at the right time, in the right place, by the right person, Cumbria County Council has changed the way we deliver some of our commissioned services.

The 0-19 Healthy Child Programme and 0-19 Child and Family Support Services form an essential part of the 0-19 Children, Young People and Families Health and Wellbeing System, which brings together and oversees the delivery of services for children and young people in Cumbria.

To make sure there is change across the 0-19 Children, Young People and Families Health and Wellbeing System, it is important we continue to embed common ways of working and understanding of need. For the whole system to work the best it can partners need to work together in a flexible and joined up way across traditional service boundaries, especially at points of Service User transition. The Early Help Partnership Strategy sets out the ways in which we will do this together.

Early Help Consultancy

Early Help Officers provide Early Help consultancy to support any agency undertaking Early Help work. Early Help consultancy includes:

- Be the first point of contact for advice and guidance, when an agency is unclear if a contact needs to be made to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub
- Advise if the child or family is already open to a children and families service
- Support others to complete an Early Help Assessment Signs of Wellbeing and Success
- Support Early Help coordinators across the partnership, to understand and co-ordinate the Team around the Family process
- Develop skills and knowledge across the partnership around our strengths based approach to the effective delivery of Early Help through briefings, workforce development, information, advice and guidance
- Provide support and challenge to agencies completing Early Help Assessment Signs of Wellbeing and Success, to ensure that the work they are completing, alongside children and families, has significant and sustained impact
- Identify and address any drift and delay in Early Help cases coordinated by partner agencies

How we will know that we are making a difference

Our goal is that families will be able to ask for help from services when they encounter difficulties and these services will support the family in resolving those difficulties to prevent them from becoming more severe and complicated. The key actions identified are intended to develop a whole system 'Think Family' approach to ensure that children and families' needs are supported at the earliest opportunity.

OUR 4 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES			
Thriving communities and families	Give children the best start in life	The right help at the right time	Earlier identification and intervention with families to prevent needs increasing
OUTCOMES			
<p>Families and communities are thriving and support each other. They are able to access support if they need it to maintain their independence.</p> <p>Families have greater resilience, improved confidence, self-awareness and capacity to recognise and respond to their own, and their children's, emerging needs.</p> <p>Strong, connected communities supporting themselves and each other to lead happy and fulfilling lives, thereby reducing the demand on statutory services.</p>	<p>Children, young people and families feel better supported and confident to and access specialist services.</p> <p>Children and young people develop the knowledge, skills and self-esteem to look after themselves and their own health and wellbeing needs as they grow up into adulthood.</p> <p>Families with children who have special educational needs will feel supported and have access to appropriate services</p> <p>Children and young people are ready and able to learn and parents/carers are able to support their child to be learning ready.</p>	<p>Families know how to access information advice and guidance and receive seamless support from integrated services.</p> <p>Whole system early help pathways are developed and are clearly understood and embedded in practice.</p> <p>Families set outcomes in their plans, alongside professionals. They have access to and can change their plan.</p>	<p>Strong connectivity with universal services to ensure people who need help are identified early, and effective step-up and step-down practices are in place.</p> <p>There is early identification and response to children in need of enhanced support, across the partnership.</p> <p>Children and Young people are safer from harm and have their needs met</p>

Continued overleaf..

How we will know that we are making a difference

KEY OBJECTIVES

<p>Increase community capacity to support effective early help delivery in localities</p> <p>Implement the 'Think Family' approach across the partnership</p> <p>Help families understand the importance of health and wellbeing</p> <p>Increase awareness and support for children, young people and families around emotional wellbeing and mental health</p>	<p>Help families understand the importance of health and wellbeing</p> <p>Support the implementation of the Early Years Strategy</p> <p>Reduce the number of cases repeatedly entering above an early help level through earlier intervention</p>	<p>Identify emerging need early and provide proportionate, evidenced based support.</p> <p>Support safe and effective step-down from statutory interventions.</p> <p>Work as a system to help vulnerable children, young people and families to be supported to achieve positive attendance at setting/school and through transition</p>	<p>Support universal providers such as schools to hold risk and need through Team Around the Family, Lead Professional roles, working in line with the Threshold Guidance</p> <p>Foster a strong culture of collaboration, integration and ownership for solution focussed interventions</p> <p>Embed whole family strengths based working</p> <p>Work together as a system to ensure that families get a co-ordinated response to identified health and wellbeing needs</p>
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Continued overleaf..

How we will know that we are making a difference

INDICATORS

<p>Reduction in the percentage of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) in aged 16 to 18.</p> <p>Reduction in childhood obesity.</p> <p>Reduction of children and young people reporting they are worried about online wellbeing</p>	<p>Increase in Breastfeeding at delivery and 6-8 weeks</p> <p>Percentage of children/ young people achieving age related expectations or better at end of Key Stages</p> <p>Diminish differences in achievement between 'disadvantaged pupils' and 'other pupils' nationally 0-19</p> <p>Children aged 0 - 5 with additional needs, and their families, receive appropriate support</p> <p>Numbers of early years providers achieving the 'Healthy Families Cumbria Early Years Pledge'</p> <p>Sufficiency of high-quality childcare in Cumbria post-COVID</p> <p>Improved speech, language and communication at age 5 due to implementation of effective support pathways</p>	<p>Reduction in inappropriate referrals for services above early help.</p> <p>Number of children and young people reporting increased wellbeing</p> <p>Reduction in persistent absence and exclusions in primary and secondary schools.</p>	<p>Reduction in new safeguarding interventions (CIN, CP and CIC)</p> <p>Reduction in under 18's admission to hospital for alcohol</p> <p>Reduction in referrals to child mental health services</p> <p>Reduction in admissions for unintentional and deliberate injury</p>
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The governance and oversight of Cumbria's Early Help Partnership Strategy recognises that the delivery of our offer is not the responsibility of a single agency but is owned by all partners that work with children, young people and families. Governance is provided by The Childrens Trust Board and Cumbria Safeguarding Children Partnership. Delivery of this strategy will be via the appropriate Early Help sub group and the Locality Children's Partnership Groups. Membership of each of these Boards is broad and involves statutory, voluntary and community sector partners.