



Cumbria Early Help Strategy 2017-2021

September 2017

Vision

Early Help in Cumbria develops resilience and independence of families, by supporting them to build on their strengths and encourages them to identify their own solutions and take responsibility for their future and that of their children.

What is Early Help

In Cumbria Early Help is the umbrella term that describes our continuum of service response based on the needs of families. This includes preventative and universal services through to targeted and edge of care.

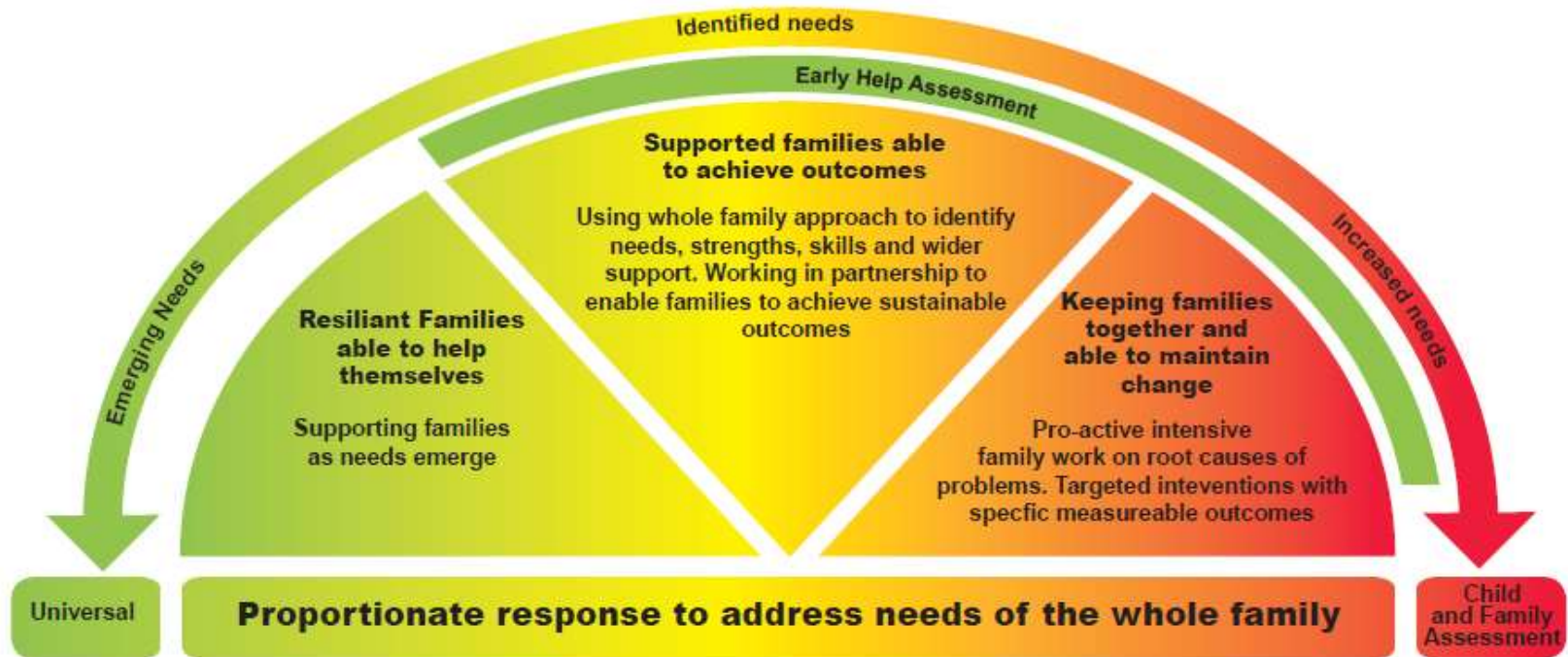
Early Help is about offering the right help, at the right time, in the right place, by the right person. Early Help is a simple concept: it is about changing our culture from an often late reaction to chronic and acute need and re-focussing our activities, along with our collective partnership, on the root causes of social problems. By doing so, outcomes for families improve and intrusive, costly statutory interventions are avoided.

Early Help is about enabling families to have the opportunity to regain control of their circumstances before they escalate into more difficult issues. In Cumbria we will do this by ensuring that we have a joined up early help system which promotes the identification of emerging needs and earlier intervention and that responds using a whole family approach.

Effective Early Help relies upon local agencies working together to:

- Identify children and families who would benefit from early help
- Undertake an assessment of the need for early help; and
- Provide a proportionate response to address the assessed needs of a child or young person and their family
- Collaborate in partnership with families using a strengths based approach evidencing sustainable outcomes
- In Cumbria we have endorsed the use of district based Early Help & Family Support Panels for those cases where professionals are concerned about the delivery of the plan or are unable to identify an appropriate co-ordinator.

Early Help Model



National context

The role of Early Help to enable children, young people and families to reach their full potential has been a common theme in a number of government reviews (Munro, Marmot, Tickell, Allen, Field)¹ They have all independently reached the same conclusions on the importance of providing help early in order to improve outcomes for children and young people, who have needs that range from preventing abuse and neglect to helping parents achieve the aspirations they hold for their children.

Nationally there has been a growing interest and understanding of the importance of evidence based Early Help services, with a need to demonstrate the effectiveness of Early Help interventions in reducing the costs associated with specialist and acute services. There is common acceptance that Early Help may not be a quick fix but a sophisticated, highly targeted process and approach with specific measurable outcomes.

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015 outlines that it is the responsibility of all practitioners working with children and young people to safeguard and promote their welfare and understand the criteria for taking action across a continuum of need, including Early Help.

“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.” Working Together 2015

Local Context

In Cumbria we are ready to renew our focus and alignment of services to better meet the changing context within which all partners are working. A number of drivers for change have emerged that require a revised Early Help Strategy that will take us through the next four years transforming our systems, these are :

- Needs of children and our evolving understanding of what works in Cumbria for children and young people
- Commissioning opportunities and priorities based on needs analysis and JSNA
- Defining new ways of working through the implementation of Signs of Safety
- Adopting a whole family approach across Children and Adult services
- Financial pressures and reduced resourcing levels across all partner agencies
- Changes in the commissioning of Health Services
- Government focus on ‘Troubled Families’ and outcomes

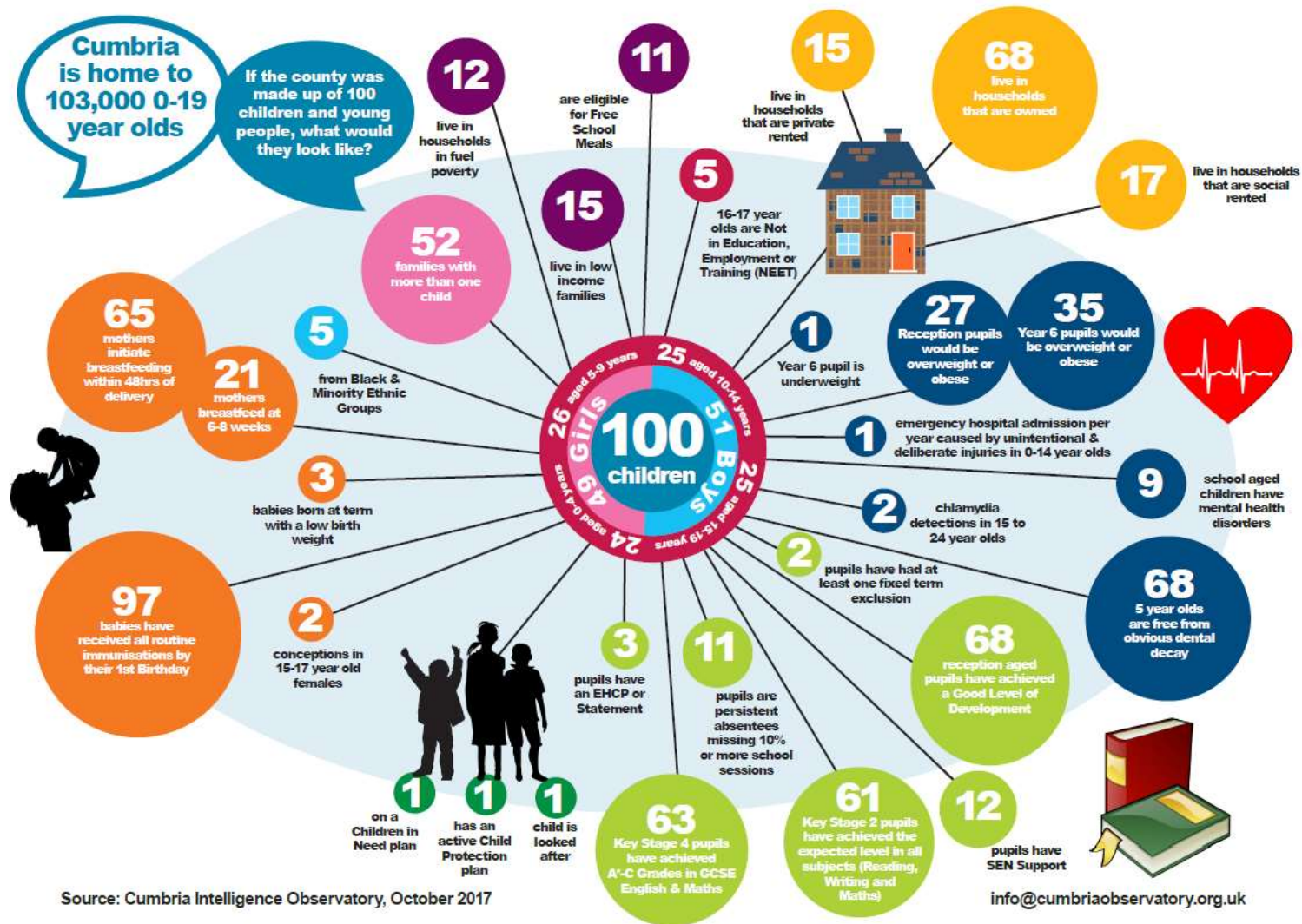
¹ Eileen Munro – Munro review of Child Protection – a child centred system – May 2011.
Sir Michael Marmot – Fair Society, Healthy Lives, The Marmot Review 2010
Graham Allen – Early Intervention: The next steps 2011
Dame Clare Tickell – The Early Years: Foundations for life, health and learning 2011
Frank Field – The foundation years: Preventing poor children becoming poor adults 2010

- A shared LSCB partnership commitment to work across services to build resilient communities

A refreshed Strategy for children and families will enable a proportionate response to emerging needs and therefore children and families will feel empowered and supported. We will see families building resilience, achieving sustainable outcomes and avoiding statutory interventions.

We believe that this strategy will also enable an evidence base of what works in order to ensure effective return on investment.

The below diagram evidences the context of Cumbria, in which we need to deliver the Early Help Offer



This diagram depicts Cumbria children and young people scaled down to 100. The statistics demonstrate that children and young people requiring an early help response far outweigh those requiring a statutory social work service. For example fifteen of the one hundred children live in a low income family, eleven are persistently absent from school, nine have a mental health problem and five 16-17 year olds are not in education, employment or training. This clearly evidences the areas of need that require an effective Early Help Strategy to ensure help and support is received at an early stage to avoid escalation to intrusive and costly statutory interventions.

Principles of Early Help

- Early Help means identifying needs within families early, and providing preventative support and intervention before problems become complex and entrenched
- Early Help means supporting children, families and communities to further develop their networks within communities, recognising that individuals, families and the wider community can often help themselves and can develop their sense of wellbeing and greater quality of life through community engagement
- Early Help means both early in life, offering support to very young children, and early after the emergence of a particular need. It includes both universal interventions and targeted interventions to prevent needs from escalating
- Early Help allows for proportionate support to be put in place at the right time to meet families' needs prior to issues reaching crisis point. It draws upon families' own skills and promotes self-reliance
- Early help services must take a pro-active approach to working with children and families and to preventing adolescent children becoming harder to help through unstructured interventions. All young people must be treated as a child in accordance with the Children Act 1989 until they attain the age of 18 years

Implementation of this Strategy

Year 1 –

- Review of the existing early help system
- Identify where in the system there can be early adopters of the refreshed Early Help model.
- Identify where re-alignment is possible and where it is required in order to fully implement this model.
- Identify service areas where gaps in the system are preventing full implementation and develop an action plan to address these issues.

A key decision point for this work will be the commissioning arrangements

Year 2 –

- Develop the early help offer; reflecting the Early Help model
- Align resources to enable the delivery of that offer.
- Explore the potential for wider alignment with services commissioned by Public Health.
- Evidence impact from early adopters of the model
- Gather feedback from children, young people and families, analyse feedback and implement change where necessary.

A key decision point in this year will be the implementation of commissioning arrangements

Year 3 – Strategy implemented

Year 4 - Review, evaluation and development of forward plan

Governance

The Strategy and resulting action plan will be monitored through the LSCB Early Help sub-group, the LSCB and the Children's Trust Board. The action plan updates and performance scorecard will be reported to the Early Help Sub-group and then to the LSCB Business Group bi-annually. Highlights and exceptions will also be reported to all LSCB Performance Management & Quality Assurance (PMQA), performance meetings. A programme of audits will be undertaken across the partnership annually and reported through the PMQA

Outcomes:

The delivery of this strategy will:

- Improve outcomes for families with needs that are met and an earlier stage.
- Reduced demand on high needs/high cost services – above all by reducing the number of Children Looked After.
- Target our spending on priority outcomes, enabling effective interventions with identified vulnerable groups.
- Work with colleagues and partners to deliver integrated services for shared outcomes, in particular health, education, employment and adult services.

Our success will be evidenced by the outcomes for families, and one of the ways of measuring this success will be through the Early Help performance scorecard, which is

monitored at the LSCB Early Help sub-group and Children & Families Services DMT.
Success will also be monitored through qualitative information:

- Feedback from families and local communities
- Improved SMART Early Help plans that are proportionate to need