

Wakefield Early Help Strategy

Nothing is more important than a child and young person's well being and quality of life

Happy, Healthy
and Safe



Introduction

For children who need additional help, every day matters.

Research is consistent in underlining the damage to children from delaying intervention. The actions taken by professionals to meet the needs of these children as early as possible can be critical to their future.

We see early help as an approach to supporting families whenever they are in need. This applies to children and young people up to the age of 19 years old and in some cases up to 25 years old.

Whilst it is parents and carers who have primary care for their children, all Local Authorities, under section 10 of the Children Act 2004, have a responsibility to promote inter-agency cooperation to improve the welfare of children. This strategy builds upon the Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018.

Wakefield Early Help Strategy January 2019 sets out the Children and Young People's Partnership Board's ambition for the development of prevention and early intervention approaches. This strategy should be read alongside the Children, Young People and Families Plan and has been

developed in response to the national policy context associated with reduced public finances and resources and the local needs of children and young people in Wakefield.

We know that if we work together to identify the needs of children, young people and their families as soon as possible and take swift action to address those needs, we can stop problems developing, getting worse or becoming entrenched.

Partnerships in Wakefield are developed through the Children and Young People's Partnership Board, the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Local Safeguarding Children Board, it is through this partnership approach that the Early Help Strategy will be at its most effective.

“ For children who need additional help, every day matters. ”



In September 2018 there were 2,564 children in need in Wakefield



Why we want Early Help?

The Wakefield approach to Early Help reflects the widespread recognition that it is better to identify and deal with concerns earlier rather than to respond when difficulties have become acute and demand action by statutory or more intense services.

There is now strong evidence of what factors place children at risk of neglect or abuse, of developing mental health problems, or failing in education, or of becoming involved in crime or anti-social behaviour. These negative outcomes damage children, young people and their families and disrupt communities where they live, which results in significant financial costs.

“ We see early help as a fully owned partnership approach to supporting children, young people and families ”

The early help offer is not just for very young children as concerns may also emerge at any point throughout childhood and adolescence. The early help offer includes universal services which are available to every family and targeted services designed to reduce or prevent specific concerns from escalating or becoming entrenched.

Early help refers both to:

- Help in the early years of a child's life. This is when the important building blocks of a child's future development are laid, including pre-natal intervention.
- Help throughout a child's, young person's and family's life; this is to help as soon as possible when there is a concern.

The aim is to stop the concern from growing or becoming a long term problem.

This strategy is designed to provide the framework by which all partners in Wakefield can cooperate, prioritise and coordinate their collective efforts around early help. It requires the involvement of a wide range of universal and targeted services across all sectors - both adult and children's services - in working together to meet the full range of needs within a family by 'Thinking Family'. Our approach will seek to strengthen communities and support the role the wider community and the voluntary sector can play in securing better outcome for children and families across the district.

Our Partnership Aims

Right help, right time

We see early help as a fully owned partnership approach to supporting children, young people and families to:

- Help themselves at the earliest stage to improve their overall wellbeing and quality of life
- Have a voice in decisions and activities which shape their early help - creating a sense of belonging and ownership
- Use an integrated whole system 'Think Family' local approach.



Why we all invest in early help

Our early help offer recognises the crucial role that all family members - not just mothers and fathers, but step parents, grandparents, siblings, other extended family members, friends and carers - play in influencing what children experience and achieve, as well as the consequences when families are in difficulty.

Our early help offer takes into account reports and reviews by Frank Field, Dame Clare Tickell, Graham Allen and Marmot, with regards to the impact of growing up in poverty on child outcomes, use of evidence based approaches and programmes, and the important focus on the early years given the increasing body of evidence around early attachment and baby brain development.

'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018' guidance places an emphasis on the importance of early help in promoting the welfare of children, together with clear arrangements for collaboration, and we want to ensure that our early help offer reflects the ambitions of this guidance.

“ children and young people achieve good outcomes through the support of their parents and immediate family members ”



“ preventative services will do more to reduce abuse and neglect than reactive services ”

Co-ordination of services is important to maximise efficiency within preventative services. There needs to be good mechanisms for helping people identify those children and young people who are suffering or likely to suffer harm from abuse and neglect and who need referral to children's social care

Early identification of children and families who would benefit from a co-ordinated early help assessment is pivotal for improving outcomes for children and families as a whole.

In Wakefield there are approximately 70,000 children and young people. The majority of children and young people have their needs met and achieve good outcomes through the support of their parents and family members and in the wider community to:

- Keep their children safe
- Give everyday care and help
- Have someone to be there for them
- Experience play, encouragement and fun
- Understand their family history, background and beliefs
- Know what is going to happen and when
- Guidance and support in making the right choices
- Support from family friends and members of the wider community
- Local resources/activities
- Comfortable and safe housing
- Work opportunities for themselves and their family
- A sense of belonging
- Good schools and childcare provision

In September 2018 there were 544 children in care in the district



Our five guiding principles

1. A strong universal offer that builds resilience

We want all children to get the best start in life. Our universal approaches start by supporting all Wakefield families from before birth of the child. The partners shown in opposite image indicate who provides universal services. The universal early help provided will be aimed at building resilience in families to provide them with the tools and skills to help and support themselves in the future and achieve their ambitions. It will be a community focussed approach designed to address the concerns of the whole household in a holistic way. The voices of children and young people about their needs and how we can meet them will be listened to.

2. Clear pathways to support

We want all families to have easy access to support when it's needed. We will clearly explain the support available and make it easy for families to contact services and professionals themselves. We aim to deliver a consistent, 'Think family' approach by joining up support across the age range, focusing on times of vulnerability such as primary to secondary school transition.

3. Joining up how we work

We want families to experience an integrated approach to assessment, planning and support. Using a single process across Wakefield's partnership will reduce the danger of duplicating effort avoiding different agencies asking families to repeat information and to maximise resources available across the district

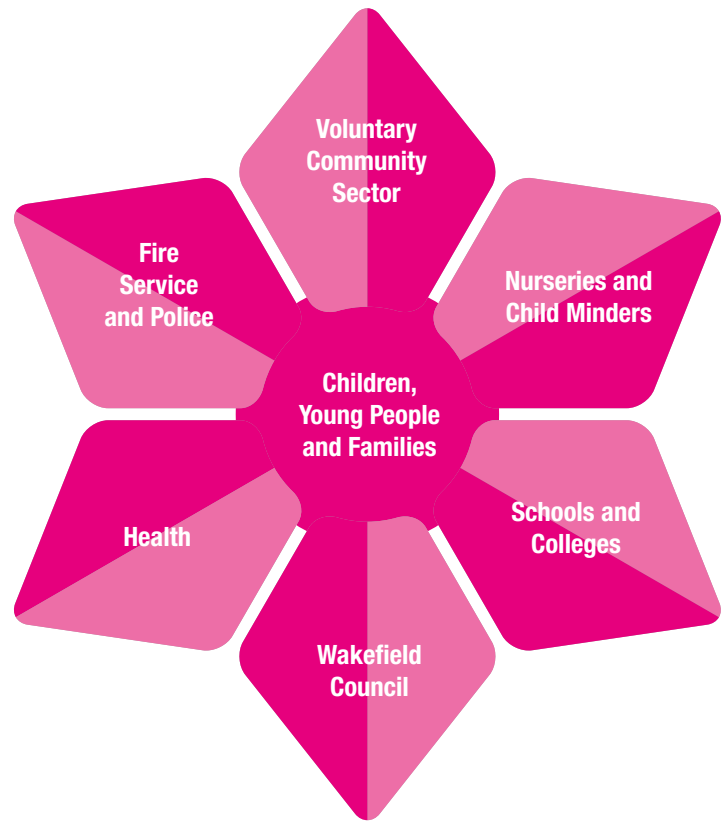
4. Supporting the whole family

We want to provide support that responds to the needs of the whole family. Support will recognise the strengths of families and work alongside them to build resilience. Families will be engaged at every stage and their experiences will help shape and improve services.

5. Measuring the difference, we make

We want families to receive support that meets their needs at the right time and makes a difference to their health, happiness and safety and to achieve their potential. We will measure the impact of our joined up approach across the partnership to check that what we do is effective and a good use of resources.

Our early help key partners



Identifying children, young people and families who would benefit from early help

Our early help offer puts the responsibility on all professionals from across the partnership to identify emerging concerns and potential unmet needs for individual children and families, irrespective of the whether they are providing services to children or adults. Professionals working in universal services are best placed to identify children or their families, who are at risk of poor outcomes. These will be in health services, such as midwives, health visitors, GPs and school nurses, or in Children's Centres, or in education provision at any age from early years onwards.

Alongside this is the use of local intelligence set out in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and data collated in respect of the Troubled Families Programme criteria that supports us to identify both groups of children and families that are more likely to be in need of early support, but also in the case of Troubled Families the individual families in need of early intervention approaches.

Professionals should, in particular, be alert to the potential need for early help for a child who:

- is disabled and has specific additional needs has special educational needs, is a young carer.
- is showing signs of engaging in anti-social or criminal behaviour
- is in a family circumstance presenting challenges for the child, such as substance abuse, adult mental health and/or domestic violence.
- is showing early signs of abuse and / or neglect and / or sexual exploitation.

“ Early help services are integral to the transition of families from Children's Social Care services, and Troubled Families Support, to less intensive support ”



Levels of support

The provision of early help services forms part of a continuum of help (appendix 1, continuum of need) and support to respond to the different levels of need of individual children and families.

Children and family needs are constantly changing and at different times in their lives they will have differing levels of involvement from a range of services, from universal, targeted and specialist support services.

To target our resources appropriately for children and their families, the early help offer aligns with the 'Continuum of Need'.

Level 1 - Universal; Children making good overall progress in all areas of their development, receiving appropriate universal services such as health and education.

Level 2 - Universal plus; Children, young people and families are experiencing emerging problems, whose needs require some targeted support. They are likely to require early help / intervention for a time limited period, to help them move back to Universal (Level 1) and reduce the likelihood of being stepped up to Targeted Formal (level 3) and Serious Complex Needs (level 4).

Level 3 - Targeted formal; Children, young people and families with identified vulnerabilities who are experiencing significant additional complex needs and are likely to require a more targeted, multi-agency co-ordinated approach. They are likely to require intervention in the medium term to help them move to Universal Plus (level 2) or Universal (level 1) services.

Level 4 - Serious complex needs; Children, young people and families who are experiencing very serious or complex needs that are having a major impact on their expected outcomes or there is serious concern for their safety. These acute needs may require statutory intensive support for children and young people to be protected. Children, young people and families receiving intervention for level 4 need are helped, where possible, in reducing the seriousness and complexity of need and are stepped down.



This is how we are going to do it

This section sets out the infrastructure and systems we have agreed and implemented as a partnership to support the early help approach in Wakefield.

Early help is delivered across the district by all partners and services who work with children and adults.

Children First Hubs working alongside NHS, Police, Schools and voluntary organisations.

Children First Hubs are based in each of the four geographical areas of Castleford & Pontefract, Normanton & Rural, Central & North West, and Featherstone & South East. These are multidisciplinary teams that offer a range of services and coordinated support by a lead professional across partners for families experiencing difficulties such as:

- School attendance problems
- Inconsistent parenting
- Children with caring responsibilities
- Families experiencing domestic abuse
- Employment and debt problems
- Health problems
- Behavioural difficulties

The best possible start

There is a sound evidence base to show that experiences in the first 1,000 days (270 days of pregnancy and the first two years of life) have a profound effect on outcomes for that child during their entire life. Ensuring that children have the best possible start to their development and family life reduces the likelihood of problems developing in the future. For example, supporting children's language development makes it much easier for them to learn when they arrive at school, and to articulate their needs and emotions.

We are increasingly aware that adverse childhood experiences (ACES) such as abuse or neglect in childhood, or witnessing domestic abuse, can profoundly affect both physical and mental health in the future. A strong universal offer in the first 1,000 days will support our parents in the emotional and psychological transition to parenthood, increasing the number of children in Wakefield who have a strong supportive start in life.

“ Early help is delivered across the district by all partners and services who work with children and adults. ”

The 'first 1,000 days of life' have been identified as a key priority in the Wakefield Children and Young People's Plan 2018/19. A multi-agency working group has been established and an action plan produced. Over the next year the group will come together to deliver a programme of work that enhances the universal offer for very young children and their families in Wakefield.

The work programme focuses on healthy eating and physical activity, language and communication, and preparation for parenthood.

Troubled Families

In 2012 the government launched the Troubled Families programme; this programme supports families who meet two or more of the following criteria. Parents and or children involved in crime or anti-social behaviour, children who have not been attending school regularly, children who need help with a family plan, adults out of work or at risk of financial exclusion, families affected by domestic violence, parents and children with a range of health problems (link to outcomes plan).

This Early Help Strategy embeds the learning from the Troubled Families in everyday practice across the partnership.

Wakefield has successfully supported families since the launch of the Troubled Families programme in 2012 and aims to support an additional 1700 families by the end of March 2020.

Taking things seriously

Our approach will ensure families feel listened to, feel in control. Families have told us they do not want to have to repeat what can be distressing information over and over again to different professionals as 'referrals' to other services are made. Children have told us they want to know that professionals take their concerns and worries seriously.

Local conversations

Our aim is to further develop a multi-agency allocation and referral pathway within Early Help. This will involve meetings or conversations with partners based in local areas, initially facilitated by the Children First Hubs, to identify children, young people and families in need of additional support and who is best placed to provide it.

“support families to develop their own resilience and resolve problems”

An Early Help Assessment will be in place to assist this process, supporting a whole family assessment approach. Children First Hubs will support partner agencies to undertake this.

Through this process local thematic trends can also be identified and an appropriate local response can be developed across the continuum of need.

Signs of safety

Wakefield uses an intervention framework underpinned by the ‘Signs of Safety’ approach for identifying and responding to need, recognising both worries and strengths. This is supported by the ‘Risk and Resilience’ framework. Taken together our model of practice ensures the child and the family are at the heart of the decision making and provides a framework for intervention that supports families to develop their own resilience and resolve problems without ongoing need for professional intervention.

“the child and the family are at the heart of the decision making”



What we are going to do next?

Working together to support families very early on in the life of a problem is a key priority for partners in the Wakefield district and although progress has been made, there is still much more to do.

Utilising learning and reviewing our progress from consultation with partners and feedback received from professionals we have developed headline actions (appendix 2, early help four point action plan) which sets out the activities we will undertake to further develop and strengthen the early help offer in Wakefield.

As we shaped the strategy, children and young people were given opportunities to influence how early help services will contribute to their sense of belonging. As a partnership will continue to ensure children and young people have a voice in early help activities and evaluation.

Progress and Outcomes

Our early help offer is targeted at achieving our Priority Outcomes as set out in the Children and Young People's Plan and Troubled Families outcomes by 2020. To achieve this, we will have improved the early help identification and response to critical issues ensuring we are helping the most vulnerable families as early as possible.

Universal services will be in place which work in conjunction with targeted models of effective intervention. Our approach will be to work with whole families to address their issues and concerns.

We have agreed three early help partnership success outcomes:

All children, young people and families in the Wakefield district:

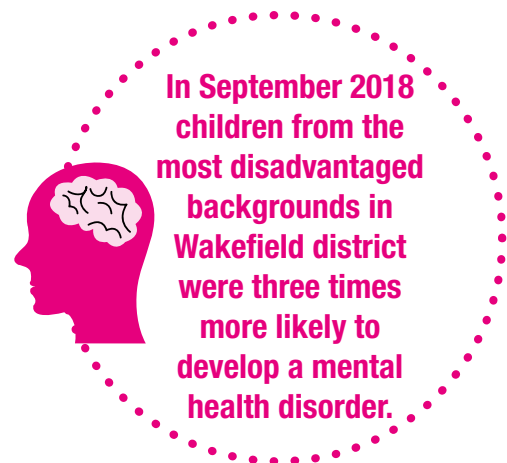
Happy - have a sense of belonging, independence and resilience

Healthy - are healthy

Safe - feel safe and are safe

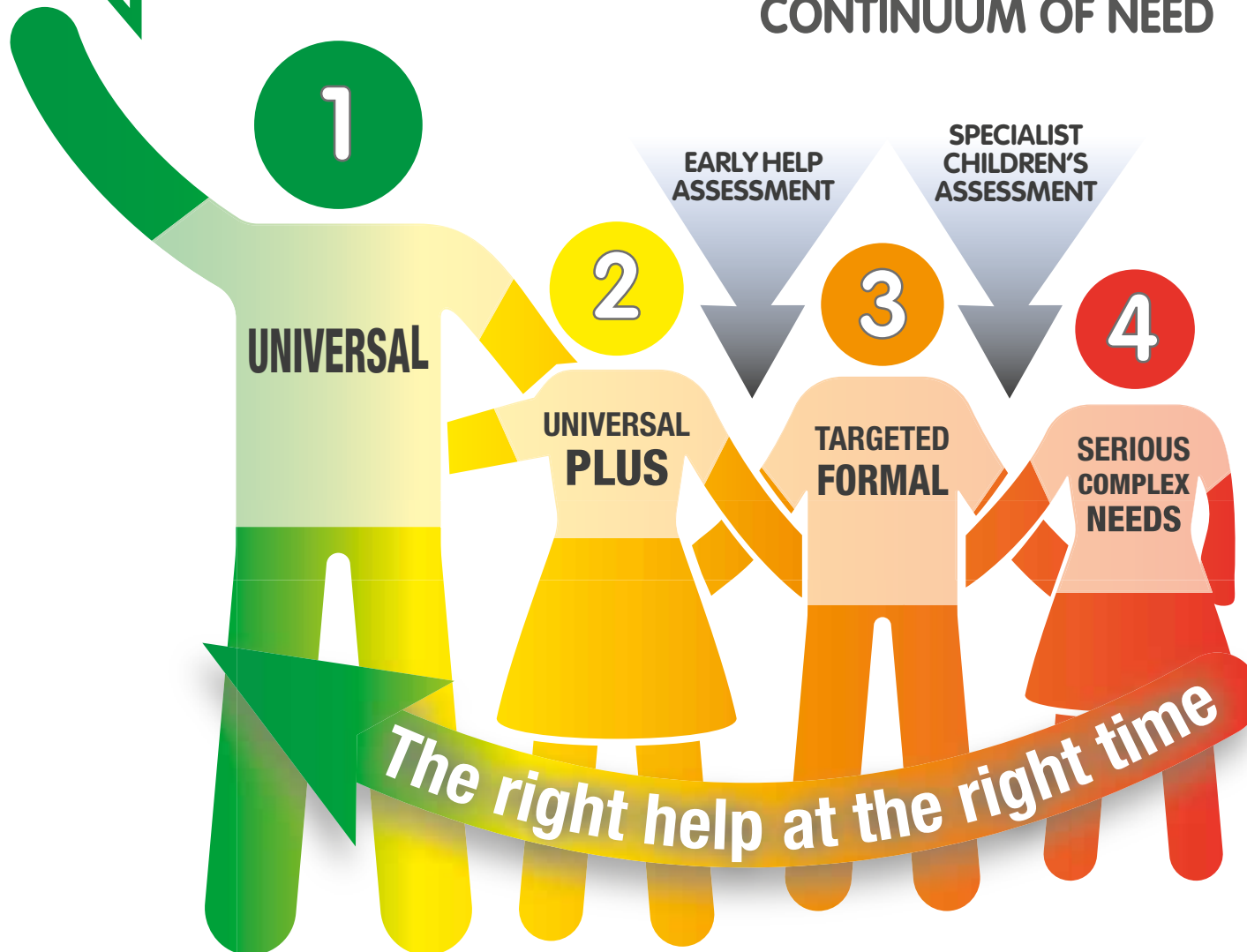
Governance and accountability

The Early Help partnership group will continue to operate to complete and roll out this strategy across the partnership. Once complete the reporting, governance and accountability function will transfer to the Children's Partnership Board.



Increasing independence for children, young people and families

CONTINUUM OF NEED



UNIVERSAL (Level 1)

Children making good overall progress in all areas of their development, receiving appropriate universal services such as health and education.

UNIVERSAL PLUS (Level 2)

Children, young people and families are experiencing emerging problems, whose needs require some targeted support. They are likely to require early help / intervention for a time limited period, to help them move back to Universal (Level 1) and reduce the likelihood of being stepped up to Targeted Formal (level 3) and Serious Complex Needs (level 4).

TARGETED FORMAL (Level 3)

Children, young people and families with identified vulnerabilities who are experiencing significant additional complex needs and are likely to require a more targeted, multi-agency co-ordinated approach. They are likely to require longer term intervention to help them move to Universal Plus (level 2) or Universal (level 1) services.

SERIOUS COMPLEX NEEDS (Level 4)

Children, young people and families who are experiencing very serious or complex needs that are having a major impact on their expected outcomes or there is serious concern for their safety. These acute needs may require statutory intensive support for children and young people to be protected. Children, young people and families receiving intervention for level 4 need are helped, where possible, in reducing the seriousness and complexity of need and are stepped down.

Embed the Early Help Approach				
Rationale	Aims	Actions	Deliverables	Success Measures
<p>Success and change in children's services needs relies on strong and effective partnership working - children and families need to strengthen joined up working between local services and these services need to be reshaped and funded collectively if they are to succeed. There is a strong commitment from partners and a key aim of the early help action plan must be to make best use of this to improve outcomes for children, young people and families. Particular focus will be directed to areas identified by OFSTED.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To rebalance and strengthen the safeguarding system through developing better early help and preventative services. We work in strong partnerships to ensure that no child slips through the net To reduce pressures on social work services through improved early help and community support To increase the number of children and families supported through earlier help To improve the quality of front line practice and develop a more relational model of support When intervention is necessary it is swift, sensitive and effective To strengthen community level partnership working around Children First Hubs To raise the confidence and satisfaction of local partners in the effectiveness of early help To promote a culture of innovation and evidence informed improvement Ensure the voice of the child "shines through" each assessment Place the child at the heart of holistic family based assessments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review community help arrangements and agree shared local action plans with partner agencies Review overall range and quality of District wide Early Help Services Work with North Lincolnshire Council Partner in Practice for shared early help learning approach Embed the application of the Continuum of Need and closely assess the impact by regular monitoring and communication on referrals and contacts that do not meet threshold Agreed culture, values and vision across Partnership Agreed shared priorities and collective investment across partners in shared priorities and plans Engage all partners in developing shared early help strategy Develop and agree and Early Help Strategy Review step up/step down approach and pathways to ensure better transfers and best practice handover between Early Help and social work teams. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early Help Strategy agreed and in place by November 2018 Review the early help assessment process by October 2018 Review role of locality hub based Police Community Support Officers September 2018 Refresh the continuum of need design and simplify the language within the levels of need by September 2018 Strengthen Risk & Resilience Framework operating model and ways of working March 2019 Local actions plan agreed for all Early Help Hubs by December 2018 Early Help practitioners and employee's development programme in place January 2019 Build Think Family Approach and align DCLG Wakefield Think Family Service Transformation into early help strategy and action plan - September 2018 Clear pathways and approach in place October 2018 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Independent evaluation shows new teams providing early help (March 2019) Local partners report improved confidence and knowledge of key local safeguarding policies, including thresholds and local hubs and are more satisfied with locality Early Help (March 2019) Audit and data show improvements to practice in key areas of joint working including CP processes, Domestic Violence and CSE. Number of families increased to support helping themselves, through knowing the full range of early help service offers

Early Help Improvement Four Point Plan

Involve Communities in Shaping Early Help

Rationale	Aims	Actions	Deliverables	Success Measures
<p>Research and reviews from Laming to Munro emphasise the importance of the voice of the child in ensuring children and are effectively supported and protected. Early help provision needs to build the right relationships and trust with children, young people and families to enable them to voice their concerns, share their views and be involved in agreeing support and plans that are right for their needs. Wakefield's children, young people and families as a whole, will have better services, better outcomes and better futures if their voices are at the heart of everything we do. This needs to become a shared value and central element of practice, process and partnerships. OFSTED's recent inspection highlighted a range of concerns around how effectively we currently work with children, young people, families and front line practice such as visits and assessments to how children and young people are involved in early help partnership planning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen arrangements for involving and empowering children, young people and families in Wakefield's' early help partnership arrangements • Ensure practice, processes and planning engage, involve, listen and reflect the voice of the child, young person and family • Improve alertness to neglect, discrimination, exploitation or extremism; 'Zero tolerance' for child maltreatment • Making best use of the changing landscape • Regular monitoring, listening to children • Help individuals, families and communities to help themselves 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree and implement action plan to strengthen involvement of families • Undertake a review led by young people and families of arrangements for involving children in early help partnership planning and agree, implement early help action plan • Facilitate conversations to ensure that children and young people are placed at the core of decision making and that we truly listen, and act upon what they tell us 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify arrangements to include the voice of the child, young people, families in shaping the early help strategy and action plan October 2018 • Create strong profiles of need to inform judgements about risk and vulnerability in respect of key groups of children, for example children who are at risk of sexual exploitation, and will inform outcomes based planning and decision making by October 2018 • Share experiences of co-location to share learning from good practice October 2018 • Strengthen the arrangements in place that clearly sets out the processes and the principles for information sharing November 2018 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent evaluation shows children, young people and families have shaped the early help strategy and action plan March 2019 • Young people and families led review follow up identifies improvements to processes and impact of involving young people and families. Actions to address areas for improvement agreed by October 2018, completed by March 2019 • Timeliness and satisfaction rates for complaints and compliments improved March 2019 • We have asked children and young people about how they want their lives to be different November 2018 and March 2019

Early Help Improvement Four Point Plan

Performance, Governance and Quality Assurance

Rationale	Aims	Actions	Deliverables	Success Measures
<p>Use performance information to drive conversations across the partnership and also with children, young people, families and front line professionals to help ensure that whatever we do genuinely makes a difference to their lives. Early help leaders to focus on 'creating the right conditions for success' ensuring there is a strong culture of child focus, learning and improvement, clear direction and support for professionals and right partnerships and resources in place to support services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make our procedures for raising, and responding to, concerns about a child straightforward and effective • Develop a shared culture of reflection, learning and improvement • Security of information, transparency about activities • We understand how successful we are in achieving our aspirations • Refresh the online early help offer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce regular, high quality performance reports • Provide information that is accurate and available to front line teams, partners and strategic management • Regular audits undertaken, used to inform practice improvement in all levels and informing partners and employees • Early help to be informed by evidence, including a deep analysis of population and service data through an improved JSNA for children • Management information for children in need of help and protection, including early help captures the number of early help assessments or similar in the last 12 months and the number receiving a service that a team around the family (TAF) by October 2018 • Refreshed early help partnership governance arrangements • Strengthen the online early help offer webpage for clearer access, information and support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robust early help performance data to inform practice • Audits and evidence show improvements to practice in key areas of joint working • Governance is in place for the leadership of early help 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent evaluation shows proactive approach in sharing information as early as possible to help identify, assess and respond to risks or concerns about the safety and welfare of children, whether this is when concerns are first emerging, or where a child is already known to the local authority children's social care March 2019 • Access to online early help offer provides information about services that children, young people and their families can expect from a range of local agencies. Knowing what is out there gives people more choice and therefore more control over what support is right for them by March 2019

Early Help Improvement Four Point Plan

First 1000 days				
Rationale	Aims	Actions	Deliverables	Success Measures
<p>The first 1000 days of a child's life, from conception to age 2 are increasingly recognised as a critical window where huge amounts of brain development take place. A child's brain develops from 25% of its adult size at birth to 75% by age 2, and between birth and eighteen months new connections are made at the rate of around a million per second. By age 3 inequalities in children's physical, cognitive and social development are already apparent. One has estimated that children from more disadvantaged backgrounds have heard 30 million less words by the time they enter school - the 'word gap'. Many children who are overweight when entering reception have already accumulated the excess weight by age 3. One of the best protective factors is a relationship with a trusted adult. Parenting and family support in the early years will support children's development into happy and secure adults.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure we have a strong universal offer for the first 1000 days of life (pregnancy and first two years) • Develop multi - agency work around language and communication, physical activity and nutrition, and universal parenting support • Focus on preventing the development of future problems by providing universal preventative support to families as early in children's lives as possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chair multi-agency 'First 1000 days' group to develop joint working and best universal offer for the early years • Develop our antenatal parenting support offer so all parents have access to group or online support covering the transition to parenthood • Develop and support initiatives to improve literacy skills and close the 'word gap' • Support and encourage physical activity for very young children in families and in early years settings • Encourage the take up of two year old education places 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear workplan aligned and reporting into the early help strategy board • Launch and embedding of early literacy initiatives - Book start, the Imagination Library or the 'Word Count' initiative (if bid successful) • Develop an early year's charter accreditation for nurseries and childminders • Proposal for antenatal support completed • Multi - agency group has clear workplan to add value to the 'first 1000 days' offer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater evidence of physical activity in pre-school age • Reduced overweight at 2 year old / reception • Increased % of eligible two year olds in early education • Increased awareness of early brain development among parents and professionals • Improved antenatal parenting support offer