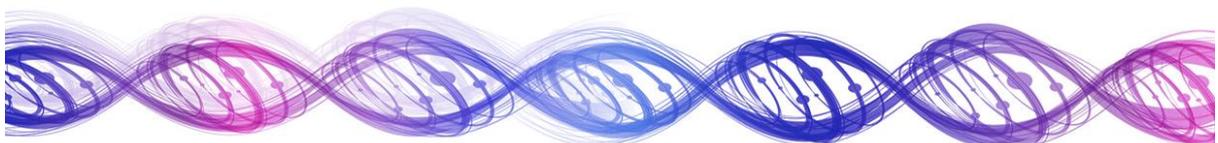




Darlington Early Help Strategy 2017 - 2020



Version Control

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1. Introduction

This document outlines the Early Help Offer for children, young people and their families that reside in the Borough of Darlington. It informs the approach that the Local Authority and partners will take in identifying and delivering support as early as possible, to children and young people, when they start to experience difficulties.

2. What is Early Help?

Early Help means providing help for children and families as soon as problems start to emerge, or when there are emerging problems predicted for the future, and is designed to reduce or prevent specific issues from escalating or becoming entrenched.

Almost everyone needs someone to help them at different points in their lives, and most people access this through friends and family or, through services which serve the whole community for example nursery, school, GPs and hospitals.

On occasions some families and their children find themselves needing a little extra help and support. Early help provides this service; ensuring families and children receive support as soon as their problems begin to impact on everyday life.

Early Help may result in advice and guidance from just one agency or be delivered through a team approach, with agencies working together to support families, including universal services such as, Education establishments, Health Visiting and GP Services.

3. National Position on Early Help

A number of Government reviews over the last 10 years (Munro, Marmot, Tickell, Allen and Field support the policy which is evidenced in the statutory guidance: The Department for Education Together to Safeguard Children 2015 which states; 'providing early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children, young people and their families than reacting later. This is further supported by the introduction of the Troubled Families Programme and the Health Visiting 'Call to Action'.

4. Knowing our Families, Knowing our Children in Darlington

- The number of children and young people under the age of 18 living in Darlington is 22,627 (2015 mid-year)
- Over the last five years, birth rates in Darlington have fallen from 1,357 in 2010 to 1,226 in 2014.
- The unemployment claimant count in Darlington for 16-24 year old stood at 3.5% of the resident population in March 2017.
- The percentage of children under 16 living in low income families is greater in Darlington at 22% compared to England at 20.1%, this represents over 4000 children in Darlington.
- The proportion eligible for free school meals at 17.3% in Darlington is higher than England at 14.3%. This represents nearly 3000 children in Darlington.
- The uptake of immunisations in children under 5 is significantly better in Darlington with the proportions who have received key childhood vaccinations similar or better than England.

- School readiness and achievement in Key Stage 1 in Darlington is either similar or better than England, with the percentage of Year 1 pupils achieving expect level in phonics being 85.9% in Darlington compared to 80.5% in England and the percentage of KS1 pupils meeting expected standards in reading, writing and maths in Darlington at 56.4% being statistically similar to England at 53.8%.
- The rate of children in need under 18 due to abuse or neglect is significantly worse in Darlington at 223.2 per 10,000 compared to England at 171.0 per 10,000
- The rate of children in need under 18 years due to family stress or dysfunction or absent parenting in Darlington is significantly worse in Darlington at 141.4 per 10,000 compared to England at 98.0 per 10,000
- The rate of parents of children under 15 years in Darlington receiving treatment for alcohol in Darlington is significantly worse at 232.7 per 100,000 compared to England at 147.2 per 100,000.
- The percentage of Teenage Mothers being 1.5% compared to England 0.9%.
- The proportion of mothers who are smoking at time of delivery in Darlington is higher at 14.8% compared to England at 10.6%,
- The proportion of babies who start breastfeeding is low with 63.2% starting in the first days following birth, compared to England where 74.3 start breastfeeding.
- High rates of emergency admissions to hospital particularly in the first 5 years of life with Darlington's rate at 169.7 per 1000,000 compared to England's rate of 106.5 per 1000,000 over the same period.

5. Links to Darlington Children and Young People Plan

'One Darlington: Perfectly Placed' is the overall plan for Darlington up to 2026. It sets the direction for organisations working together within a Darlington Partnership to make the borough an even better place to live and work.

The Darlington Children and Young People's Plan has created the vision for our town in respect of young people. Darlington and its partners' commitment to Early Help is central to the delivery of this plan, cutting across the ambitions and priority actions as detailed in the plan.

The plan intends to focus the collective effort of Darlington's partner organisations to make a difference to the lives of our children and young people, acknowledging that we have an important job to do to improve overall outcomes for all children and to close the inequalities gap that exists between some children, young people and their peers.

The plan covers all services for children, young people and their families. For young people leaving care and those with learning difficulties, responsibility extends to the age of 25 ensuring the transition to adult services, is properly planned and delivered. The outcomes linked to this strategy are:

- Children with the best start in life
- Enough support for people when needed

The Children and young People's Plan Sets out Four Ambitions

Ambition 1: Ensuring that all children and young people are safe from any perceived harm

Ambition 2: Improving the health and wellbeing of all babies, children and young people

Ambition 3: Improving achievement and academic attainment for all children and young people

Ambition 4: Empowering families to be resilient and to achieve economic wellbeing

6. Vision for Early Help and Prevention

- Everyone and every agency working with young children and young people have a responsibility to care about families. In Darlington no single agency can deliver on this task alone. All partners will work together to support children, young people and their families and ensure they are heard and can play an active part in their communities.
- Addressing problems early, means that children and families lives are improved. It protects children from serious harm and improves their health and wellbeing
- Provide services that we know work and are evidence based
- Understand the needs of children and their family, so that the appropriate support is offered using an agreed assessment tool known as the Early help Assessment (EHA).
- Partners take a collective responsibility to support parent and carers to build resilience in supporting families to remain to gather, whilst ensuring all partners fulfil their responsibility to safeguard children and young people
- Partner organisations taking a shared responsibility to provide services for families.
- Partnership approach to creating a multi-skilled workforce, which is able to provide the right support at the right time.

7. The Aim of this Strategy is:

Support children and young people aged 0-19 and their families to become resilient and live as a family unit, building resilience and skills to manage the challenges of everyday life.

Ensure that all partner agencies Think Family and quickly identify those who might need extra help.

Ensure the coordination of services for those who require them, through the use of the Early Help Assessment and an agreed One Family Plan.

8. The Principals underpinning the Early Help Strategy are:

Parents have responsibility to meet the needs of their children. Parenting is challenging and asking for help should be a sign of positive parenting.

Families tell their story once, partner organisations recognise family's needs and ensure they receive the right help at the right time which builds sustainability in families.

Problems may emerge at any given point in childhood and the focus of Early Help should be to prevent and reduce the need for specialist or statutory intervention.

Early Help should be strengthened by the use of information sharing, clear communication and understanding between agencies and families.

Universal and more targeted services play a crucial role in prevention for families and whole family and multiple agency working is the key to reducing escalation.

9. What does effective Early Help feel like

For Families

- They tell their story once.
- They are listened to and involved at all stages.
- They have a Key Contact or Lead Practitioner who co-ordinates their support and keeps things simple and manageable.
- They have a trusting but challenging relationship with their Key Contact/Lead Practitioner.
- They are empowered to make the changes they want to in their lives.
- They focus on their strengths and building resilience.
- They know where to find information, advice and support in future.
- The workforce is motivated and confident, skilled and experienced.

For Practitioners

- A simple, streamlined referral and assessment process.
- A multi-disciplinary approach bringing together a range of Practitioner skills and expertise in a 'Team Around the Child' and 'Team Around the School'.
- Practitioners empower individuals and families to develop the capacity to resolve their own problems.
- The workforce is motivated and confident, skilled and experienced.

For Partner Agencies

- Partners work well together – sharing information and effective practice, and developing creative solutions with families so they get the help they need.
- The performance and impact of early help is assessed collectively to inform future decision making and service planning.

- Proposed changes in one organisation are shared early with other partners so the impact on the early help system is understood and mitigating action can be taken.
- The workforce is motivated and confident, skilled and experienced.

10. What we have achieved so far?

- Remodelled the Local Authority Early Help Service to target those families most at risk of escalation to statutory services. The Local Authority uses a Signs of Safety Model which is improving the identification of needs within a family.
- Revised the Continuum of Need which was ratified by Darlington Safeguarding Children Board and this has supported organisations in identify those families in need of early help.
- Developed a single point of access – Children Access Point (CAP) including the Early Help Coordination role, and Family Information Service. This is supported by social work trained staff to provide effective and timely access to advice, guidance and support and this has strengthened the offer to families and practitioners as they only tell their story once. This is supported by Durham Constabulary and Harrogate Foundation Trust.
- Achieved the first phase of the Troubled Families programme supported by a range of agencies including police, DWP and adult social care and secured funding for the second phase. The next phase is in operation and families are regularly identified. Up to 31 August 2017 4366 families have entered the programme and 727 have successfully completed the programme.
- Role of the Lead Practitioner training rolled out to all partners and settings.
- Working with partners a revised Early Help Assessment and Action Plan tool has been developed.
- Reinstated the Early Help Co-ordinator role in 2016 to ensure agencies are better supported in completing assessments and managing the Early Help Process.
- Established an electronic library of child friendly tools available to all partner organisations to ensure the voice of the child can be heard throughout the Early Help work.
- The Local Authority has procured an integrated 0-19 Public Health Service modelled on the Healthy Child Programme so that all children have access to high quality health advice and information.
- The Public Health Service has procured a new Community Contraception Service with an enhanced offer to young people under the age of 25 so that young people can access quality advice at the earliest opportunity.
- Supported School Readiness for nursery aged children 2-3 years via a Home School Transition Model developed in conjunction with the local authority and primary/nursery schools delivered in partnership to ensure those most

disadvantaged have the best start to education with percentage of Year 1 pupils achieving the expected level in the phonics screening check increasing faster than England and the NE Region.

- Low birth weight of all babies has decreased and is now better than the England and Regional average.
- Continued with the reduction in the rate of teenage conceptions with the rate for Darlington which is now statistically similar to England.

11. Priority Actions – Early Help 2017 to 2020

Together with our partners we are going to:

a. Embed the Governance and Multi-Agency Approach to Early Help

Outcome: To continue to develop the Early Help Strategic Partnership to ensure that the work is overseen and supported at a strategic level and is effective

Our Actions:

Action 1: Ensure appropriate governance is in place for the leadership of Early Help across all agencies in Darlington

Action 2: To continue to develop the Early Help Scorecard

b. Support Children, Families and Communities to become more resilient

Outcome: An increase in children, young people and families reporting a positive and effective change as a result of an Early Help Offer

Our Actions:

Action 1: All partners to work together to identify and support families using a Think Family and Tell Your Story Once philosophy via a coordinated approach using the Team around the Family Model.

Action 2: To develop an Edge of Care Model within Early Help. This aims to support young people to remain with their family.

This will also support reunification programme for children in care who have the potential, with multi-agency support, to be returned to the care of their family.

Action 3: To embed feedback tools for families and practitioners to ensure that services can measure and understand the impact of early help and evaluate impact of services to inform future commissioning intentions.

c. Provide Early Help Early and Effectively

Outcome: To offer quality multi-agency support to parents and young people, so risks are reduced and children and young people remain within their family.

Our Actions:

Action 1: Deliver a successful multi-agency Early Help offer which is fully embedded and mature by 2020 as part of the Troubled Families Transformation of Services programme and becomes mainstream practice by the end of the programme

Action 2: Ensure partners support the delivery of an effective model by continuing to develop training on the Signs of Safety Model, strengthening information sharing, ensuring early identification in supporting children and young people.

Action 3: Explore the potential for increasing the location of other agencies within the Children Access Point to provide a one stop shop for families and agencies of advice, guidance and support to sign post effectively.

Action 4: Explore the effective use of the Local Authority case recording system for Early Help to develop an electronic Early Help Assessment process that can be used by external organisations and partners.

d. Strengthen the uptake of the Lead Practitioner Role by all Organisations

Outcome: Staff across all agencies have the skills and knowledge to identify and work with families to resolve the issues at the earliest opportunity.

Our Actions:

Action 1: To work together as a partnership to develop the role of the Lead Practitioner and support those agencies to take on this role, where appropriate for families.

Action 2: Re design the electronic information system (currently Families Information Service) to provide a comprehensive and high quality electronic information service that is easily accessible to families and partners with an updated and comprehensive list of services available to support families.

e. Monitoring Performance and Outcomes

An Early Help Strategy Group (EHSG) has been established and terms of reference agreed. The EHSG is made up of multi-agency representatives who will be champions for their organisation, and will ensure a robust and co-ordinated approach to early help.

This group will monitor the multi-agency implementation and performance of Early Help Assessments and Pathways. Support the development of a quality assurance framework and develop an audit tool and programme to develop consistency of quality of early help assessments across partnership organisations

Our Outcome:

To agree performance data to inform the effectiveness of Early Help to include multi-agency audit, workforce indicators and performance data.

Our Actions:

Action 1: To develop tools that capture the distance travelled through the use of a grading profile at both the beginning and end of the intervention.

Action 2: To develop a multi-agency performance framework to measure effectiveness.

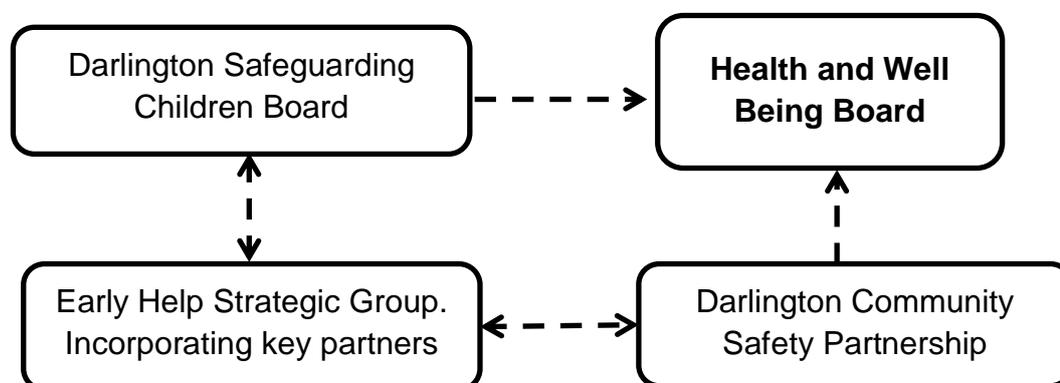
Action 3: To develop a multi-agency audit programme.

12. Governance, Monitoring and Accountability

The Darlington Safeguarding Children Board (the Board) oversees the governance of the strategy and holds agencies to account on the delivery of Early Help Services; with linkages to the Community Safety Partnership (CSP). The strategy has been developed through the Early Help Strategic Group which includes representatives from a range of statutory bodies, schools and voluntary sector and provides assurances to the Board on the delivery of the strategy.

The performance framework will be reviewed in six months to monitor initial impact and the Strategy updated if required to ensure stated aims and values are being prioritised. (April 2018). Following this, reviews will be made at least annually.

The flowchart below identifies the overall governance routes from the DSCB and the links to the Health and Well Being Board.



13. Evaluation and Review

The multi-agency performance in achieving the outcomes of this Strategy will be reported as a partnership report to the Darlington Safeguarding Children Board at six-monthly intervals. The Strategy will be updated on an annual basis to ensure it reflects current needs of children, young people and their families and supports collaborative working.