

**Special Children & Young People's
Service Overview and Scrutiny
Committee**

27 January 2025

Overview of Early Help Services



**Report of John Pearce, Corporate Director Children & Young
People's Services**

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide.

Purpose of the Report

- 1 This report provides information about the County Durham Early Help Offer, to support the dedicated session at Scrutiny on this topic.

Executive summary

- 2 Early Help is the term used in County Durham to describe our approach to providing support to vulnerable children, young people, and families as soon as problems start to emerge or when there is a strong likelihood that problems will emerge in the future. Some early help support is described as 'targeted early help' and is provided to children and families who are identified by practitioners to have multiple or complex needs, requiring a specialist and/or multi-agency response but where statutory social work intervention is not needed.
- 3 To support Scrutiny with this focused session on Early Help, this brief covering report is accompanied by a detailed slide pack which covers a range of key areas relating to Early Help.
- 4 The accompanying slide pack at Appendix 2 covers:
 - (a) County Durham's Early Help Strategy (2024/26) and Early Help System;
 - (b) National legislation which applies to Early Help and the current Inspection Framework;
 - (c) Governance and funding arrangements;

- (d) The Family Hub and Start for Life Offer;
 - (e) Intensive Family Support Services;
 - (f) Early Help Partnership Working;
 - (g) Supporting Families Programme;
 - (h) Innovation and national good practice;
 - (i) Next steps - Family Help and Social Care national reforms.
- 5 It is recognised that Early Help covers many areas of support provided by a range of services across the local education, health and care system and has several inter-dependencies.
- 6 Whilst the accompanying slide pack has sought to provide a comprehensive overview, it is recognised there may be areas members of scrutiny may wish to explore in more detail during the session or at subsequent meetings of the Committee. A range of links to local and national background papers which may be helpful to scrutiny members is also listed below to support preparations for the session.

Recommendation

- 7 Members are asked to note this report and use the content of the attached presentation and background papers to support discussions at the special session.

Background

- Early Help Strategy (2024/27)

<https://www.durham.gov.uk/media/43834/Draft-County-Durham-Early-Help-Strategy/pdf/DraftCountyDurhamsEarlyHelpStrategy.pdf?m=1705912915787>

- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/669e7501ab418ab055592a7b/Working_together_to_safeguard_children_2023.pdf

- Inspecting Local Authority Children's Services (2024)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inspecting-local-authority-childrens-services-from-2018/b3edac72-cb9e-413b-b8d5-f2a5c23900cc>

- Supporting Families Outcomes Framework

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-families-programme-guidance-2022-to-2025/chapter-3-the-national-supporting-families-outcome-framework>

- Family Hubs and Start for Life

[Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme](#)

- Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill – currently going through Parliament

[Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill - Parliamentary Bills - UK Parliament](#)

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023, is the Department for Education Statutory Guidance on multi-agency working to help, protect and promote the welfare of children. This guidance applies to all local authorities.

Finance

There are a range of financial implications relating to Early Help Services. The presentation particularly highlights the current position in relation to future funding confirmed.

Consultation and Engagement

Section 19 of the Children and Families Act 2014 makes clear that Local Authorities must ensure that children, young people, parents, and carers are involved in decisions about local provision.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

The Equality Act 2010 details the requirement when making decisions to have due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity for people with protected characteristics, foster good relations between such groups and eliminate unlawful discrimination.

Climate Change

Staff who work in the service undertake mandatory E - learning courses on climate change.

Human Rights

None directly.

Crime and Disorder

Through our Early Help offer we aim to support children and young people in achieving their best outcomes in life. Early intervention and support for children and young people should have a positive impact on crime and disorder by helping to prevent offending and / or reoffending.

Staffing

A range of staff across Early Help Services support children, young people, and their families.

Accommodation

None directly.

Risk

None directly.

Procurement

Commissioning and procurement implications are considered for each strand of work related to Early Help and the Family Hub and Start for Life Offer.

Appendix 2: Early Help in County Durham presentation
