

**Cabinet**

**15 July 2015**

**Early Help Strategy**



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**Report of Corporate Management Team**

**Rachael Shimmin, Corporate Director Children and Adults Services**

**Cllr Ossie Johnson, Portfolio Holder for Children and Adult Services**

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**Purpose of the report**

1. The Early Help Strategy for Children Young People and Families in County Durham was endorsed by the Children and Families Partnership in June 2014. This report aims to update Cabinet on work that has taken place since June 2014 to embed the strategy across the partnership.
2. Early help is an approach. The need for early help can occur at any point in time. Central to this approach is a focus on increasing independence for families and communities, supporting and building resilience. It is a way of thinking and working that views children, young people and their families as equal partners with an emphasis on doing 'with' rather than doing 'to'.
3. The strategy refers to early help both in the context of the early years of a child's life (including pre natal interventions) and early in the emergence of a problem at any stage in their lives.
4. It incorporates the concepts of 'protection/treatment', 'early intervention' and 'prevention' and the importance of anticipating problems and taking action to prevent these. Our workforce must be supported to assertively identify, help and support our children, young people and families at the earliest opportunity to stop their needs developing and enable them to meet positive outcomes.
5. The Early Help Strategy takes into account the individual needs of the whole family including social, educational, physical and mental health and wider impacts such as social and health inequalities and material disadvantage
6. The strategy shares the vision of the Children and Families Partnership that '**All children, young people and families achieve and succeed**'. The strategy's core objective is to help deliver this vision by ensuring that County Durham has an effective and consistent early help offer across its partnership.

## **The Ambitions of the Early Help Strategy**

7. Underpinning this vision are three main ambitions;

- **We will work collaboratively- Early help will be everyone's business**
- **Children, young people and families will get the right help at the right time.**
- **We will provide help that we know works**

## **One Year on- Programmes of work and Key Achievements**

8. Almost a year on, significant progress has been made. Early Help has started to be recognised in everyday practice as crucial to achieving positive outcomes for children and their families. Early Help is now written into many policies, plans and strategies across the Durham partnership.

## **Ambitions and Strategic Actions**

9. Each Ambition from the strategy has key strategic actions to ensure the ambitions are achieved. Progress against each of these ambitions and their aligned strategic actions are mapped out below.

10. **Ambition 1-We will work collaboratively- Early help will be everyone's business**

11. **Strategic Action 1** - We need to ensure there are clear pathways to share information and identify families early so we are able to work in genuine collaboration to get the best offer of support at the right time to the right families.

12. **Early Help Forums** are now up and running across the County. The forums will be used as a line of communication between the LSCB and front line practitioners. The purpose of the forums as set out in the terms of Reference is;

- To provide the opportunity for practitioners across partner agencies to share information about good and poor practice so that they can learn lessons, make improvements and contribute to improving outcomes for children and their families
- To provide the LSCB and the Children and Families Partnership with a practitioner's perspective in relation to how effective the Early Help Strategy, Think Family approach and safeguarding arrangements are working in Durham
- To ensure that where issues of concern are not resolved at a local level these are escalated to the LSCB so they can provide challenge where appropriate.

13. There are three locality based Early Help Forums which align with Durham Constabulary Boundaries of North South and East, the forums will run bi-monthly in each area the first round of which were held in January 2015.

14. Although Membership is still being developed the first round of forums were well attended by a wide range of agencies and representation was received from CDDFT, Durham Constabulary, TEWV, some key 3<sup>rd</sup> sector partners and a wide range of DCC services such as Children's, Neighbourhoods and RED.
15. Work with the schools Communities of Learning has started to ensure our schools are fully on board with these forums and representation is expected at the March forums.
16. These forums now need to grip the delivery of early help across the partnership and ensure there is accountability for early identification of children, young people and families who need early help support.
17. **The 0-19 Pathway** The new single assessment practice guidance underpins the work across children's services and are now in use alongside a range of practice tools. New practice standards are in development and an engagement toolkit and risk assessment is now published on the LSCB website which specifically highlights risk and encourages information sharing on a multiagency level for families who are refusing help and support.
18. Durham's LSCB website has updated guides and protocols to help practitioners understand the arrangements for information sharing within County Durham. The website is public and information is accessible by all.
19. **Strategic Action 2** - We need to embed the Think Family ethos across our partnership so that the well-being of children and young people can be properly addressed by ensuring that the voice and needs of the child are heard and clearly informs our work alongside assisting parents.
20. **Workforce Development** The Think Family Partnership has developed a robust work force development plan since the introduction of Stronger Families (Durham's response to the national Trouble Families Programme) since its introduction in 2011.
21. The Partnership Board will continue to use Stronger Families to drive and embed Durham's Early Help and Think Family ethos.
22. The work delivered by the Think Family Mentoring Service has included direct workforce development and training with a broad range of practitioners across the County Durham Partnership including 1:1 mentoring, case file audits, family monitoring data collection and extensive learning networks, courses, qualifications and engagement events.
23. The Think Family Workforce Development Programme won the national CYPS Now Staff Development award in 2014. This programme was developed and is being delivered in partnership with a range of local key partners and is governed by a sub group of the Think Family Partnership.
24. **Integrating Strategies** Early Help and Think Family themes are now clearly visible in many plans and strategies across the Partnership and as phase 2 of the national troubled families programme gets under way these will be revisited to ensure they reflect the new criteria.

25. Think Family is now a cross cutting theme of the County Durham partnership and this work is now aligned with the Think family Partnership. Think Family Services and it's partnership board now need to now focus on driving culture change across the partnership and ensuring 'early help' and 'think family' become part of everyday thinking and practice.

**26. Ambition 2 - Children, young people and families will get the right help at the right time.**

27. **Strategic Action 1** - We will use a single but proportionate assessment model across all levels of need and assessment. Help and assessment will be offered in tandem so that families are not waiting for early help and support.

28. **Strategic Action 2** - We will, never do nothing. We will use our staircase model to adopt a 'step up- step down', 'Think Family' approach so that families move smoothly between services and a seamless offer of support is received at the right level at the right time

29. **The Single Assessment and practice guidance** launched across children's services in April 2014 it replaced the Pre CAF, CAF, Initial and Core Assessments. The assessment aims to allow for a smother seamless route for families through services as need escalates or reduces. It will enable a consistently high quality assessment and care plan for the whole family and will reduce duplication of work between services.

30. Although the assessment is now embedded across Children's Services this is only the beginning of its journey and there is still a long way to go to ensure this process is as effective as it can be.

31. **Durham's MASH** launched in March 2015. This partnership arrangement will ensure that effective information sharing and communication is achieved at the point of referral. It will allow practitioners to have a fuller picture as to what service is best suited to offer a child, young person or family based on their need.

32. **Never Do Nothing** is now in practice and is endorsed by the Local Safeguarding Children's Board for County Durham. Never do nothing is a safeguarding standard for voluntary and 3<sup>rd</sup> sector organisations to promote good practice in the safeguarding of children and young people in County Durham through empowering people to know what action to take when faced with a safeguarding concern.

33. It provides guidance for individuals; staff, volunteers, carers, etc as well as providing a framework for delivery of safeguarding within any organisation, within any sector – so that no-one is left in any doubt as to what action to take when they have a concern about the welfare of a child or young person in County Durham.

**34. Ambition 3- We will provide help that we know works**

35. **Strategic Action 1**- We will ensure our commissioning strategies are aligned.

36. Early Help and Think Family are now common themes in most commissioning strategies within children's services. An Early Help commissioning strategy is

being developed by colleagues in Public Health which will act as a foundation for all future commissioning in Children and Adults Services.

37. Further work across the Durham Partnership must now continue to ensure Early Help becomes a key priority when all services are being commissioned. There is still a long way to go in this area to ensure that our services are coordinated but there are some good examples already such as;
- The strong partnership work to prevent Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE). This work has had a focus on early help and will be established with a preventative and coordinated approach to tackle CSE at the earliest possible opportunity.
  - The joint funding of a full time mentor post between Children's Services, Public Health and the CDFT to really drive Early Help and Think Family within Health Visiting and School Nursing services.
  - The Well Being Model has led to the commissioning of 10 early help resilience workers in The One Point Service by Public Health to deliver Strengthening Families Programmes at an early and preventative stage.
  - The Innovations Programme will bring significant investment into early help.
38. **Strategic Action 2-** We will audit our current activity and reshape what we offer to match the needs of our families to prevent children from experiencing harm, neglect and poor outcomes.
39. **Service reshaping** Children's Services have commissioned a range of early help such as FIP, Pathfinder, Pre-birth, One Point and Assessment and Intervention. All these services have helped reshape Children's services and have laid a foundation to start develop both culture and practice change. The DFE innovation programme will now enable us to accelerate this transformation across the County.
40. **Multi agency audits** continue to be driven by the LSCB and a new audit process within children's services was introduced in June 2014. These audits help inform and develop practice across our partnership.
41. Multi agency audits will play a part in the Early Help Forums and some targeted pieces of work in underperforming areas are likely to commence within 2015.
42. **Strategic Action 3 -** We will be outcome focussed. Services will demonstrate and monitor what difference they have made to the lives of the children and families who use them.
43. Traditionally many services including children's have focused performance measures around quantitative data and processes. Currently within Children's Services only the Stronger Families programme formally tracks outcomes for individual families on a large scale although recently the One Point Service has introduced a formal system to track family outcomes.
44. A new outcomes Framework is being developed which will encourage practitioners and services to look at wider outcomes for the whole family and enable analysis of what difference our support and interventions make to families. It will measure genuine and sustainable change for families and emphasise the

importance of gaining the views of children and their families when producing care plans and packages of support.

45. The Framework was originally produced for the Stronger Families Programme in partnership with a wide range of services. The framework has been nationally recognised as an exemplar piece of work by the DCLG who have since shared the framework with all local authorities across the country. This will now be further developed in Durham with the ambition to embed it in to everyday practice within Children's Services and sharing this practice with all partners working with families in Durham.

### **Outcomes**

46. The Early Help Strategy has six overarching outcomes that we expect to be delivered if the key ambitions and strategic actions are successfully implemented;

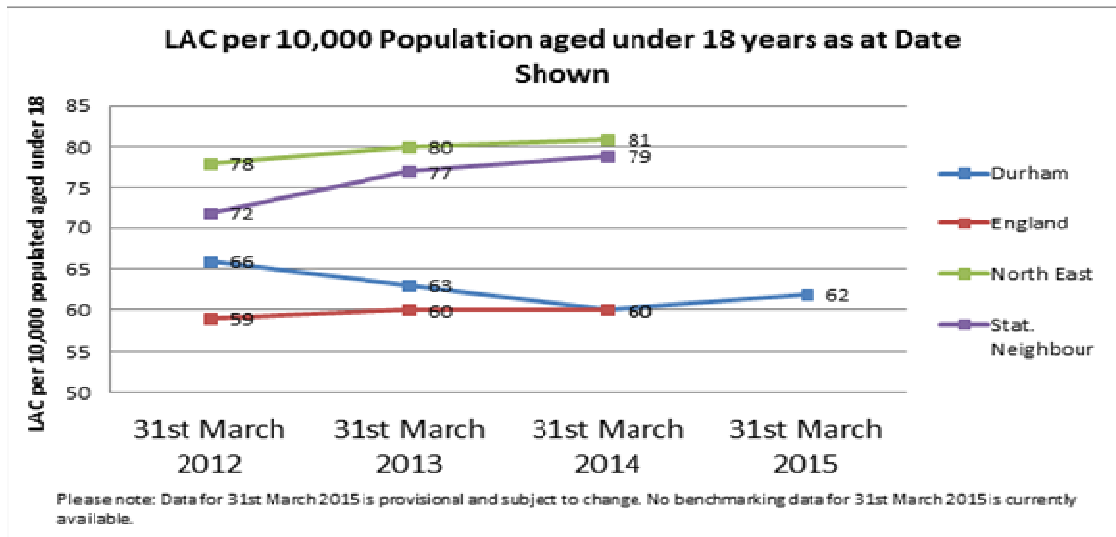
- 1) Fewer Looked After Children
- 2) Fewer children subject to a Child Protection Plan
- 3) Fewer re-referrals in to statutory services and services at level 4 and 5 of our continuum of need
- 4) More children young people and their families achieving positive outcomes
- 5) A greater number of families identified early and receiving help through our universal, preventative and early help services.
- 6) A greater number of children being 'ready for school'

47. There is a long way still to go to achieve these outcomes but there have been some key achievements and evidence of impact since the Early Help Strategy was implemented.

### **Fewer Looked After Children**

48. An Early Help ethos can be implemented even at the highest end of need and our Looked After and Young People's Services now have had a 73% increase in adoptions and Our Looked After Children rate has reduced by 8% (50) since 2012. This is a huge achievement and the graph below (fig.1) shows that this goes against both local and national trends.

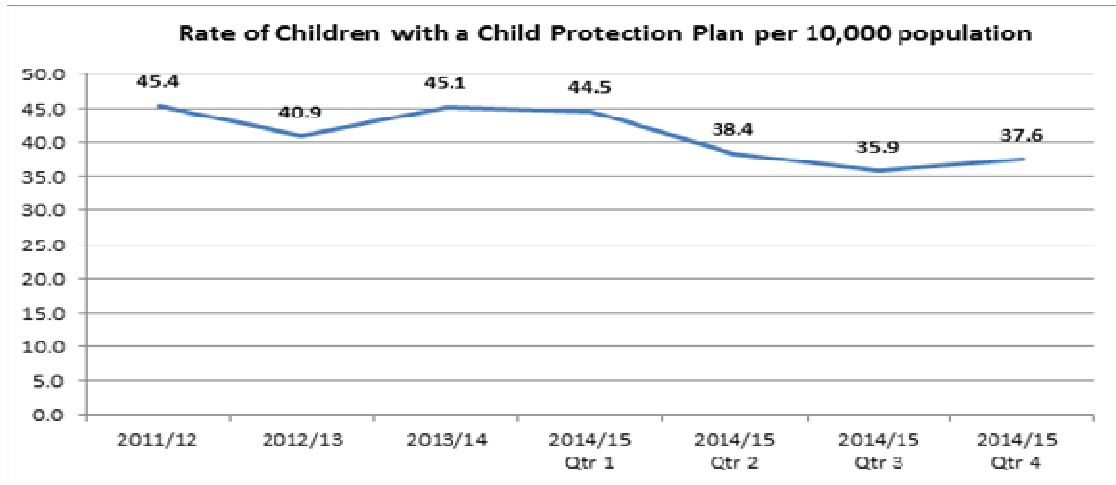
Fig. 1



49.

**Fewer children subject to a Child Protection Plan**

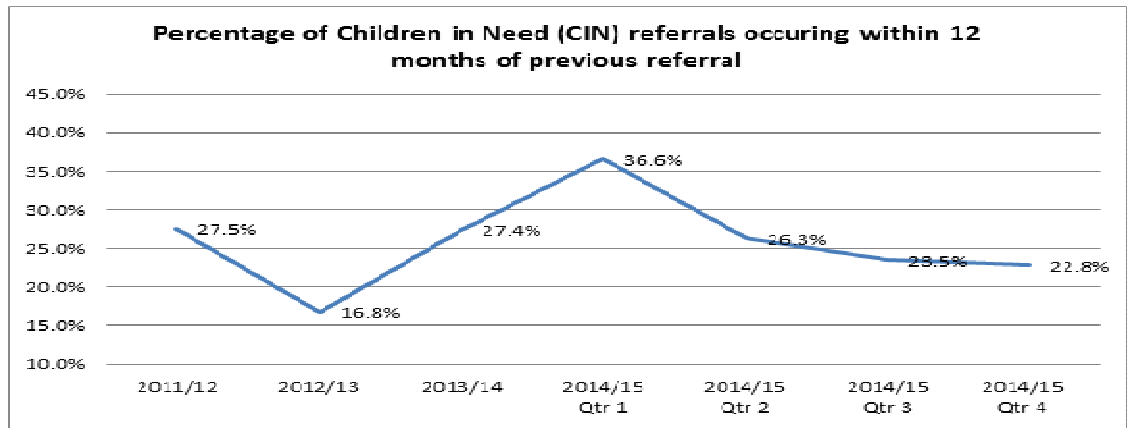
50. As at 31st December 2014 there were 360 children subject to a Child Protection Plan, which equates to a rate of 35.9 per 10,000 population. This is an improvement from the same period of the previous year (44.9).



51.

**Fewer re-referrals in to statutory services and services at level 4 and 5 of our continuum of need**

52. The Children in Need re-referral rate for Quarter 3 2014/15 is 23.5%. This is better than the 2014/15 target of 28.0% and is an improvement from 27.4% in 2013/14.



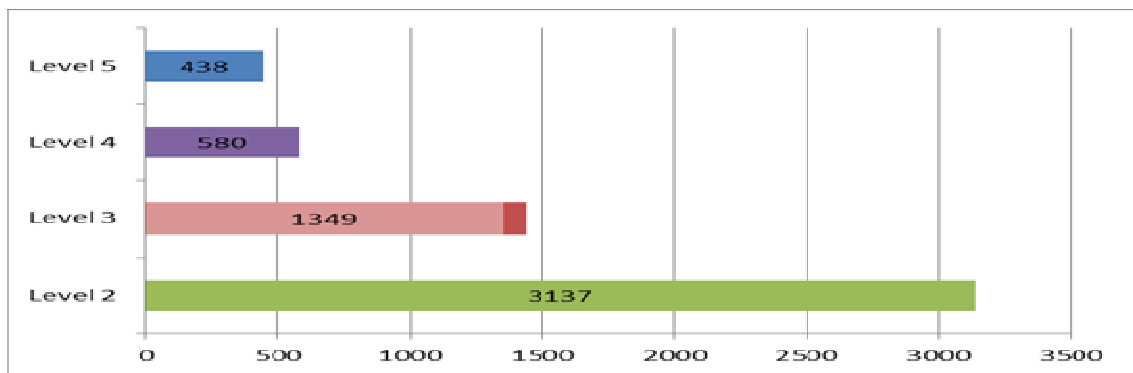
a.

**More children young people and their families achieving positive outcomes**

- We now have the lowest ever levels that Durham has seen for young people who are NEET (6.4%)
- We have successfully claimed for 90% of our target families for Phase 1 of the Stronger Families Programme and are confident that we will have 100% by the end of the programme. This means, so far, we have ‘turned around’ 1,185 families against the national measure of poor school attendance, unemployment, youth crime and adult ASB alongside a wide range of local criteria such as health, housing and domestic abuse. The successful delivery of Phase 1 meant that in October 2014 Durham was invited to be one of 50 early starters for phase 2 of the national programme.

**A greater number of identified early and receiving help through our universal, preventative and early help services.**

53. The Early Help Strategy described a projected proportionate service delivery in Durham-How we would hope to see activity in Durham. This is shown in the graph below (Fig 2.)



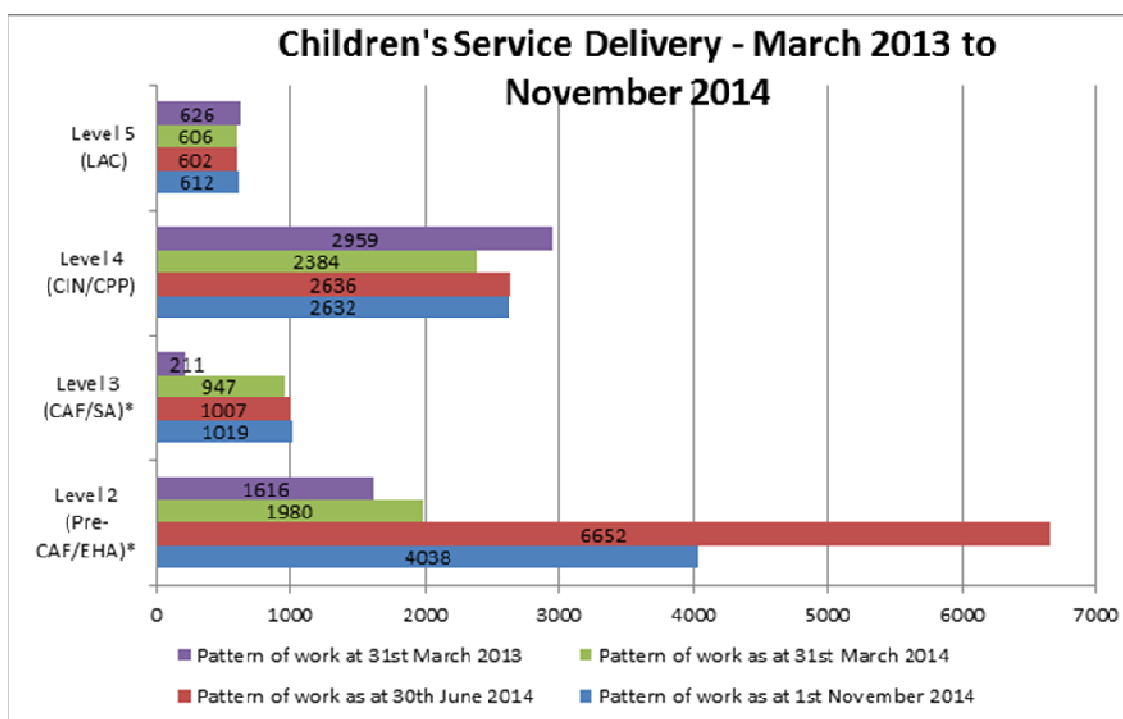
54.

55. The graph shows if we deliver early help successfully across all of our partners we would expect a proportionate decrease in families receiving support the higher up the level of need they go with the largest cohort being at level 2 and the smallest at level 5. It should be expected, that numbers reduce, as need increases.



56. This model would not only have significant cost saving implications but it would mean we have successfully supported more children, young people and families to achieve positive outcomes and prevented them from moving up the continuum of need.

57. The graph below (fig 3) shows the progress we have made to achieve this ideal model of practice.



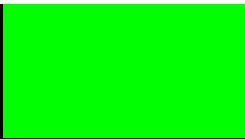
58.

### A greater number of children being 'ready for school'

59. Data for the 2013/14 Academic Year shows that 56.7% (3,089 out of 5,447) of pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage achieved a Good Level of Development.

60. Performance is far better than that achieved in the 2012/13 Academic Year (41.9%) and exceeds national (52%), regional (45%) and Statistical Neighbour (47%) averages (2012/13 Academic Year).

61. 2012/13	62. 2013/14	63. Indicator	64. 2014/15	65. 2014/15 Annual Target
66. Not Reported	67. 41.9 (2012/13 Ac Yr)	68. Early Years Foundation Stage Profile - Number of pupils achieving a	69. 70. 56.7% 71. (2013/14 Ac Yr)	72. 48 (2013/14 Ac Yr)

		Good Level of Developme nt	
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## Governance

73. The delivery of an effective early help offer is not the responsibility of a single agency. It requires a Think Family approach owned by all partners working with children, young people and families.
74. Durham's LSCB is responsible for the governance of the Early Help Strategy. Scrutiny is also provided by the Children Young People and Families Partnership via the Think Family Partnership, and other sub groups of this governance arrangement.
75. Early help now needs to become much more of a partnership responsibility and the newly formed, LSCB Early Help Sub Group, needs to now grip this piece of work and ensure the strategic actions are genuinely implemented and achieved across all of our services. This group will need to ensure that the early identification of families who need help and support becomes everyone's business.
76. This sub group will also govern the Early Help Forums which are set out earlier in this report.

## Summary

77. This report recognises that substantial progress has been made against all actions and ambitions. It also acknowledges that there is still a long way to go to fully implement the early Help Strategy.
78. This report highlights where that future work needs to focus on the following key areas;
- Early Identification of families who need help, support and intervention.
  - An emphasis on neglect and its early identification at all levels of need.
  - Engagement with schools
  - A tight grip of the governance of the Early Help Strategy
  - Continuation to drive and embed an 'early help' and 'think family' culture across our partnership
  - A focus on significant and sustained outcomes for families

## Recommendations

79. That Cabinet receives this report and acknowledge the progress made and the planned future developments.

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Background Papers- The Early Help Strategy for Children, Young People and Families in County Durham 2014

**Finance –**

The traditional model of waiting until problems become apparent, paying for programme delivery and assuming good outcomes will follow is no longer enough.

Early Help is an approach which offers a real opportunity to make lasting improvements to the lives of our children, to forestall many persistent social problems and end their transmission from one generation to the next.

There is a potential for significant savings to budgets across Children and Adult Services and more widely across the County Durham Partnership using this invest to save approach.

**Staffing –**

Early Help is everyone's business; all staff must incorporate an early help approach to their day to day work ensuring that at every occasion children, young people and their family's needs are addressed at the earliest opportunity.

**Risk –** It is essential that risks are assessed and acted upon swiftly so that children and young people are safeguarded.

**Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty -** Not applicable

**Accommodation -** Not applicable

**Crime and Disorder –**

Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour can be prevented and reduced if there is early intervention

If we offer help earlier and more effectively rather than intervening after children and young people have become involved in violence and crime we can prevent it happening in the first place.

**Human Rights –** Not applicable

**Consultation –** Not applicable

**Procurement -** Not applicable

**Disability Issues –**

Applies equally to children, young people and families.

**Legal Implications -** Not applicable